

FATAL OBEDIENCE;

OR, THE

HISTORY

OF

MR. FREELAND. K

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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BATAL. GRENADIERES

OF THE

1ST BATTALION

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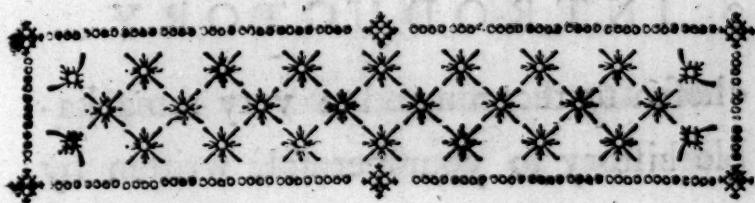
1ST BATTALION

OF THE

1ST BATTALION

OF THE





INTRODUCTORY LETTER,

FROM A
FATHER to his CHILDREN.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,

YE are now all of an age to
listen to the dictates of rea-
son, and to pay a proper at-
tention to the instructions of wisdom;
but as the most salutary admonitions
may appear dull and prove tedious,
when too frequently repeated, though
repeated by him who is, you may be
assured, your sincerest friend, I have

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B

chosen

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chosen to recommend a very remarkable history to your perusal, written by a gentleman with whom I became acquainted when I was last in Somersetshire. The moral lessons contained in it may be highly serviceable to you. He permitted me to shew it to my own family, but intreated me not to let any other persons read it; telling me, however, at the same time, that he had altered names and places sufficiently to prevent its giving offence, if it should happen to get out of my hands.

After this little preamble, it will be necessary to inform you in what manner our acquaintance began.

As I was returning home from a visit I had made, at about ten miles distance from my friend's house, at which I had
spent

spent two or three months, I was overtaken by a violent storm of rain; my situation was the more disagreeable, as I had lost my way and could by no means recover the right road. Meeting with nobody to give me any information, I rode on till I came to a thick hedge, which bounded a large garden; I was in hopes that it led to some house, but no building appeared; my horse and I began both to be weary. While I was considering what course to steer, the rain ceased: I then looked round me and saw a man surveying me from the hedge. He soon called to me, civilly told me that the road I was in led to his grounds, and asked me if I had any business with him. Glad was

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I to hear myself thus accosted, for I conceived hopes that I should procure some very desirable and necessary intelligence for the continuation of my journey. I then at once told the person who spoke to me from whence I came and whither I wished to go. With a good-natured smile, he said, that I was several miles out of the road to the place I mentioned, and would hardly be able to reach it that night; politely asking me to take shelter with him till the morning. I do assure you I never felt more satisfaction from any invitation in my life, as I was both wet and weary: there was something too so very engaging in the voice and language of the gentleman, for I found him to be a gentleman, tho' he

he was in an exceeding plain dress, that I wished for nothing more than to accept of his hospitable offer.

Upon my declaring the pleasure which I felt at the politeness and generosity of his behaviour to me, he opened a little gate in the hedge, and, desiring me to fasten my horse to a post just by, told me that he would send a servant to me to take care of it. He then conducted me through part of his garden to a rustic edifice in the midst of it, for nothing remarkable but its elegant simplicity. He soon called his servants about him, and dispatched one for my horse, and another for cloaths and linen, my own being very uncomfortable : having ordered them to be dried, he left me to put on those brought to me.

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As soon as I was dressed he returned, and, with a benevolent smile, not to be described, asked me how I found myself, and if I would accept of some refreshment, while a bed was preparing for me. I should not have refused, I believe, any thing he had offered to me; for his requests were made in such a winning manner, that they almost forced compliance with them. I therefore sat down with him to a very elegant little supper; my relish of which was considerably heightened by his agreeable and entertaining conversation. The apartment allotted to me, and to which he introduced me himself when I chose to retire, was in the same style of graceful simplicity with the rest of the building.

As the morning was uncommonly
pleasant,

pleasant, and as I had gone early to rest, I rose betimes; and, allured by the prospect from my window, to take a nearer view of it, I went down into the garden, which was extensive, and laid out in a very beautiful taste: the charms of nature, conspicuous throughout, were slightly assisted by the embellishments of art.

I was so delighted with this smiling spot, that I could not prevail on myself to return to the house: accordingly I remained there till I was met by the owner of it, who told me that he generally took a walk before breakfast, and that the satisfaction which he felt from a survey of the beauties of his garden, always kindled devotion in his heart: he looked as if he felt what he had uttered;

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and I sincerely assured him, that the picture before me had the same effect upon mine. After an agreeable breakfast, rendered doubly so by the polite manners and pleasing society of the master of it, he said, “As you have
“done me the pleasure, sir, to approve
“of the disposition of my grounds, will
“you take the trouble to walk over my
“house?”

You may believe that I readily closed with his request: I attended him, and found every thing about his pretty habitation contrived with exquisite propriety. Books, musical instruments, (my new friend, I found, was a good performer) pictures, &c. &c. were intermixed in so *pittoresque* a manner with the necessary furniture, that it was impossible

possible not to be highly amused. In short, Mr. Freeland, for that was the name of my hospitable entertainer, improved so much upon me by his sentiments and behaviour, that I was easily persuaded by him to stay above a fortnight at his house, having acquainted the friend, to whom I was going, with the accident which had at first detained me. But during the whole time I staid with him, we never saw a single creature, the servants of the family excepted, nor did he ever mention his having connections with any man living. I could not help, I confess, discovering my astonishment that a man so early in life, so perfectly amiable in his person and manners, so formed to give the highest pleasure to his fellow-creatures,

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and of a disposition naturally social, should choose to live so entirely secluded from the world, and pass all his hours alone. I also took the liberty to press him to return the visit I had so cheerfully made, by going with me to my friends, by whom he would, I knew, be sincerely welcomed : but he directly excused himself in a way which shewed that all intreaties of that kind would be resisted : adding, with a sigh, “ The
“ world has long had no joys for me :
“ happiness I must never hope for :
“ resignation to my fate is all that is
“ left for me, though I sometimes feel
“ myself hardly able to be resigned.”

I was here again astonished, and totally at a loss to know what could have induced a man so capable of pleasing, of charming

charming indeed, in the prime of life, and possessed of an affluent fortune, to shut himself up thus, and bury himself in solitude. A man so exceedingly captivating in conversation, that I never, I think, met with any body superior to him in conversible powers. However, notwithstanding all my eager desire to be informed of the motives which governed his conduct, I could not abruptly demand them without making an ill return for his politeness and hospitality: yet I could not conceal, I did not wish to conceal my curiosity. I told him how much satisfaction he would give me by disclosing the reasons which had induced him to lead a life of obscurity, letting him see, at the same time, that my sincere intention was to persuade him,

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by rational arguments, to return to society, to alleviate his affliction, from whatever source it had sprung, and to blunt, by degrees, the poignancy of it. My arguments were insufficient: they had no effect upon him, though he did me the favour to assure me that he had not, since he excluded himself from society, accidentally conversed with a man whose arguments had staggered his resolution so much as mine; he confessed, however, that he could not yield to them: "Were you, sir," continued he, "sensible of the pleasure I take, I
"allow it indeed to be a melancholy
"one, in brooding over past scenes,
"you would not I believe so absolutely condemn me, as it is the only pleasure left for me to enjoy."

I re-

I replied that his enjoyment was of a very destructive nature, and that he certainly would, by giving way to his tormenting reflections, hurt his spirits, and in the end injure his health. "The body
 "and mind," added I, "are too intimately connected not to be affected
 "by each other's disorders; and I do not
 "know how you can satisfy your conscience for this kind of voluntary
 "suicide."

I should have also warmly urged his depriving himself, by a solitary life, of any opportunities of being in any shape serviceable to mankind, had I not seen, while I staid with him, frequent proofs of his charity and generosity, which convinced me that he was not only possessed of a large fortune, but that he

was

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was also an excellent œconomist of the sums committed to his care; for, on a more particular inspection into his affairs, he seemed to be literally, only a steward for those who by his liberality were furnished, not only with the meer necessities, but with the comforts of life. I could therefore only attack him on the neglect of his health. His reply was, that as he had recourse to no methods to shorten his life, though he had been a thousand times tempted to wish a period to his existence, he could not look on himself in a criminal light for living in the manner which was the most agreeable to him.

Conversations of this sort were often renewed between us when we met: we fell into them insensibly; for he was never

ver better pleased than in recollecting past occurrences, though the remembrance of them kept his affliction alive; and I was very desirous of endeavouring to refute all his apologies for a life which I really believed (setting aside the great satisfaction I hoped to enjoy in his friendship and his company) injurious to him.

Our repeated conversations brought him, at length, to be more free and open with me; and to such a degree was our intimacy carried, that, one day, upon my saying the disappointments he had met with were certainly more terrible than those with which human life is commonly embittered, he replied, “ Were I to
“ relate the occurrences of my life, you
“ would,

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“ would, perhaps, be of my way of
“ thinking: though I am apt to believe
“ that few men have such keen sensibili-
“ ty. My sensibility, sir, has destroyed
“ my peace,” continued he, sighing:
“ but your curiosity I perceive increases,
“ and I am almost prompted to gratify
“ it, from a firm persuasion that your
“ wishes for the conquest of my disgust
“ to society are sincere, and arise entire-
“ ly from a disinterested regard for me.
“ I have employed some part of my
“ time, since I have been here, in draw-
“ ing up a kind of history of my life :
“ when you leave me you shall take it
“ with you, provided you will give me
“ your word not to shew it to any per-
“ sons but to those with whom you are
“ im-

“ immediately connected, and to conceal, even from them, the place of my retirement.”

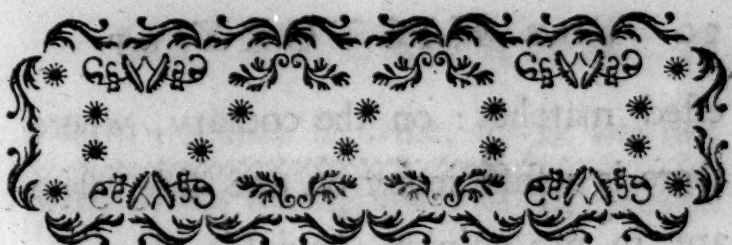
I readily agreed, you may imagine, to these injunctions. When I returned home, I perused it with avidity; and in a letter, acknowledging my obligations to him for the confidence reposed in me, begged him to give me leave to transcribe his manuscript for the benefit of my young family. After some modest apologies he complied with my request, and the packet which accompanies this letter contains the said history.

T. WILMOT.

A D-

ADVERTISEMENT.

A Descendant from the gentleman who wrote the foregoing Introductory Letter to the following History, imagining that, as all the parties concerned in it are now dead, he may venture to publish it without giving any offence to any person whatever, has put it into the editor's hands for publication ; because he flatters himself that a perusal of it will afford entertainment and instruction.



T H E
H I S T O R Y
O F

Mr. FREELAND.

(WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.)

MY father was the younger
son of a good family ; and
I never heard of his being
guilty of a foolish action
till he married an amiable woman with-
out any money. I would not be thought,
by saying so, to disapprove of disinter-
ested

ested matches : on the contrary, where there is a sufficiency on one side, they are, in my opinion, laudable ; but the man who has not a sufficiency discovers very little affection for the object of his passion, by marrying her with nothing ; because he runs the risque of involving both her and a young family in the deepest distress : distress which he must, I imagine, feel with redoubled anguish, by having been immediately instrumental to it, by sacrificing discretion to love.

My father, however, had a fortune : it was a small one indeed ; but either from a disinclination to business, or a fondness for the tranquility of a country life, he settled some miles from the capital, and threw part of his income into
a farm ;

a farm; which in time, as he was not equal to the management of it, proved rather detrimental than advantageous to him. The diminution of his income was the more sensibly felt, as his family was increased by a son and a daughter three years younger.

My father, tho' he loved the country, was neither a clown nor a sportsman; having been liberally educated himself, he chose to bestow the same kind of education on me: though, from his great affection for me, as well as from a prudential passion for œconomy, he instructed me himself in every branch of classical learning, for which employment he was very well qualified: he by so doing preserved, possibly, my morals, which might have been corrupted in a public school;

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school; but he made me so tenderly attached to him, to my mother, and to my sister, that, when the time arrived for my going to the university, I felt very painful sensations; little less painful, perhaps, than those which the amputation of a limb would have occasioned.

I had an uncommon esteem and love for my mother, who was a most amiable and accomplished woman; and she had taken so much care to make my sister as amiable and as accomplished as herself, that it was impossible not to doat on them both.

As I was perpetually present while my sister received her instructions, I became better able to educate a young lady than any governess whatever; but as I was obliged to be separated from
my

my dear relations at a time when, by the strength of my intellects, I became most capable of admiring their virtues, very painful was my parting from them. Scarce was I reconciled to that parting, by time, when the death of my father brought a new disquietude to me: it happened while I was at Oxford: the news was inexpressibly afflictive. We found, by his will, that he had equally divided his little fortune between us.

I returned home upon this melancholy occasion, in order to do every thing in my power to console my mother, who felt her loss most sensibly; but I was dreadfully shocked to see her still more affected by the bad health of my sister, who was, I too soon perceived,
in

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in a deep consumption. The distress which I felt at seeing her wasting away, added to my mother's sorrow, almost rendered me incapable of affording her any comfort : yet I could not bring myself to think of leaving them. I accordingly staid ; but the daily decay of my sister, and my mother's insupportable grief, tore my heart in pieces.

—My father had in his will appointed my mother and a particular friend of his joint trustees for my sister and me, as I then wanted four years of being of age, and my sister seven. This person, whose name was Gordon, finding that I did not return to pursue my studies, in which I had, however, made a considerable progress, as I was determined at my first going to college, to lose no
time,

time, that I might the sooner leave it, proposed to place me in a merchant's counting-house. I was somewhat surpris'd at his proposal, telling him that, if my father had intended me for trade, he might have spared both the time and expence required in an university-education, as such an education was by no means necessary for the understanding of mercantile affairs.

"That is true," replied he ; "but the
 " knowledge which you have gained at
 " Oxford will not hurt you in any sta-
 " tion of life you may be engaged in :
 " and I would have you consider, that
 " it will be a great while before a
 " young physician (physic had been my
 " principal study) can make his way in
 " the world ; and that you will, with
 VOL. I. C "the

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“ the more difficulty rise in the profes-
“ sion of physick, as your father is dead,
“ whose connections might have proved
“ highly serviceable. Now when you
“ have lived five years as a clerk with
“ the gentleman in question, you will be
“ your own master, and may then im-
“ mediately enter into partnership with
“ him with the remainder of your for-
“ tune, which will secure you a genteel
“ and certain subsistence at once. On
“ the contrary, if you pursue the study
“ of physick, your advancement in the
“ world will be very slow, and your
“ success will be very precarious: you
“ may be unable to support yourself
“ handsomely till you are successful,
“ especially as a much greater ex-
“ pence in the article of appearance
“ will

“ will be absolutely necessary. A
 “ thousand pounds only will be ex-
 “ pected by my friend the merchant,
 “ and the interest of your remaining
 “ fortune will keep you in cloaths and
 “ pocket money, till your five years of
 “ servitude are expired ; at the expira-
 “ tion of which, you will at once enter
 “ upon a genteel and respectable in-
 “ come without any farther trouble.”

I listened to this proposal with an in-
 tention to take the advice of my
 friends ; believing that they knew far
 better than myself what was fittest for
 me. My own inclination, indeed, led
 me to follow the designs of my father,
 but I could not think that Mr. Gordon's
 offer had an unplaufible appearance : I
 therefore left it to my mother to deter-

mine for me; being assured that I could not give her too many proofs of my duty and affection. Dejected beyond expression on the loss of my father, doubly distressed at seeing my sister hastening after him, and having an implicit faith in Mr. Gordon's friendship, my dear mother advised me to place myself with Mr. Ashurst.

I willingly consented to what my beloved parent deemed best for me: but as soon as the indentures were drawn she died, having lost her daughter but a few weeks before: the affliction she felt on the loss of that daughter, added to what she had already endured by the death of her husband, shortened, no doubt, her days: deprived of her husband and her children, I may say, for
I was

I was in a manner taken from her, life had no comfort for her, and she sunk into a melancholy, which, preying upon her spirits, soon brought her to her grave.

I want words to describe the exquisite anguish which I felt, on being robbed of every dear relation so early in life; I now may say that I was at the same time robbed of every friend, though I was not then inclined to believe that I was quite friendless, as both Mr. Gordon and Mr. Ashurst seemed to sympathize with me: the former, who was now my sole trustee, advised me to sell the farm and turn every thing into money, that he might put it into the funds for me.

Careless of every thing, since I had lost all that was dear to me, I consented to his

proposal. My sorrows indeed were too piercing, and too much engrossed my attention to permit me to make any opposition to it. I even hurried away from a place which but too much reminded me of losses never to be repaired, and was soon settled with Mr. Ashurst, whose family consisted of himself, a daughter, a clerk, two women servants, and a footman.

Miss Ashurst, at the time I came to live with her father, was about eleven years old, and a very fine girl of that age: she was tall and genteel; she had a fair complexion, and her features were animated with a colour like that of a blushing rose; she was not a regular beauty, but her features were expressive of a good understanding and a gentle disposition:

sition : she had dark blue eyes, in which there was a peculiar softness which, added to her infantine smiles, and little playfome ways, made her appear the most agreeable child I had ever seen : yet she was then but a child, and consequently no companion for me ; and, indeed, at that time I desired not to see or to speak to any body : I was totally absorbed in grief, and had I not applied indefatigably to business, should possibly have sunk under it. Confinement and solitude, however, grew at length rather irksome to me. Mr. Ashurst was, I soon found, a man devoted to every kind of pleasure ; and as I was as unfit a companion for him as his daughter was for me, he commonly both dined and supped abroad, kept late hours, and

feldom rose early in a morning; I therefore dined either alone or with this little girl when she was not detained all day at a school in the neighbourhood, to which she went to learn to read and work: by being thus left continually with her, and having nothing else to take off my thoughts, my attention was imperceptibly attached to the object perpetually before me: she was very good natured I plainly perceived, but I as clearly saw that she was, either from conversing with no body but her school-fellows abroad, or setting with the servants at home, ill behaved and ignorant to an uncommon degree for a girl of her age; yet, as I had no business to correct her, and always treated her like the daughter of the man to whom I was,
for

for a time, to be subservient, she seemed more satisfied with me than with any of the servants, who scolded her, and behaved to her with a vulgarness and indecency, which at length became quite shocking to me: yet, imagining that they would not pay the least regard to my reprehensions, though ever so mildly delivered, I was silent, and only strove to compose her, when in tears, by diverting her thoughts, or by persuading her gently to do what was desired, when nothing improper was asked.

My behaviour so far gained upon her, that she soon became fond of me, and would scarce be any where but with me; even when I was writing she would come and sit by me, and amuse herself by looking over me. In short,

she so took off my attention from what I was about, that I was frequently obliged to intreat her, with all the good-humour I could assume, to leave me.

A request of this kind I one day repeated so often, that she at last exclaimed, with tears in her eyes, “How
“cruel you are to send me from you?
“How often have you told me that the
“servants are not fit companions for
“me? With whom then can I sit? My
“Papa is always abroad, and there’s
“no-body but you: yet, indeed, Mr.
“Freeland, I am sorry to vex you;
“but if I could write as well as you
“can, I would employ myself as you
“do in helping my Papa, and then I
“shouldn’t disturb you.”

There was such a *naïveté* in this
speech,

speech, and at the same time so much good sense in it, that I took her up in my lap, dried her pretty innocent eyes, and told her that she should stay with me as long as she pleased.

“Teach me to write, then,” said she, looking earnestly in my face, “and I will do some of your business for you.”

I could not help smiling at her request, but thought her desire of improvement so commendable, that I promised to agree to it. Accordingly I told her, that if she would be good, and sit quiet, I would give her some copies.

She received them with an infantine gratitude, that went to my heart. She jumped up in my lap, threw her arms

round my neck, and cried, "Thankee,
 " thankee, dear Mr. Freeland ; I will
 " be a very good girl ; indeed I will."

I never had been so touched since the death of my poor Emilia. Giving, therefore, the amiable little Gertrude a brotherly kiss, I placed her by my side, and wrote down the alphabet for her to copy ; and she copied it with a facility which exceeded my expectation. She soon made an extraordinary progress with her pen, and in a few months wrote a good hand. My instructions to her, and the many pretty ways she found out to express her acknowledgments, amused me prodigiously. In return for those acknowledgements, I sometimes played to her upon a harpsichord, which had been her mother's : I had learned music

with

with my sister, and took great delight in it; but since her death it had only filled me with a thousand melancholy reflections: the little Gertrude, however, discovered so much satisfaction, and indeed so much taste, that, as she had also a good voice, I attempted to make her sing and play meerly for amusement. She soon became an apt scholar; and Mr. Ashurst was so pleased with seeing my instructions, both with regard to musick and writing, attended with so much success, as to save the expence and trouble of masters, that he removed her entirely from school, and encouraged me, by a number of civilities, to proceed to inform his daughter of every thing proper for so fine a young girl to learn.

Miss

Miss Ashurst naturally fell into this scheme of her father's, and in time became very well acquainted with the French language in the same manner.

When the continual opportunities I had of observing her had made me wish that her mind was also polished, as she seemed to have quick parts, though no pains had been taken to improve them, no care to form her as a girl of her age and station ought to be formed; an affectionate compassion for her rendered me studious, not only to convince Gertrude of her faults, but to induce her to desire to mend them: and as I remembered the lessons which my mother perpetually taught my sister, I repeated the same to this amiable child, who, from the gentleness of my reproofs, and the reasons

reasons I gave her why she ought to endeavour to cultivate her mind, and correct her carriage, soon improved exceedingly, and grew a very agreeable companion for me when I was disengaged. Mr. Ashurst, however, though very civil to me in order to incite me to continue to be his daughter's instructor, (as he saw plainly that the accomplishments which she had acquired under my tuition, made her appear to greater advantage, especially as her person began to grow with her increasing years, extremely attractive) could not help exhibiting his own ill habits. He was always engaged in a manner by no means suitable to the character which I at first believed him to be. Soon, indeed, did I discover him to be of a quite different

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different complexion: for, when he found that he could trust me, he left all his affairs entirely to my management, of which he expected the highest approbation. My principles, indeed, urged me to use my best endeavours to do my duty to Mr. Ashurst, and also to improve myself, in a business from which I was to derive my future support, as my fortune, even with the addition of my mother's and sister's, was by no means large. Yet I often wished to have more of my master's company, and to have him a witness to transactions left entirely to my conduct. I was for some time, indeed, happily assisted by the clerk, already mentioned, who had been long in the family, but he died in about three years after the superintendence of it fell to my

my lot: I had then no assistant, and consequently less time to bestow upon Gertrude: she wanted every day, it is true, less of my admonition, being so very quick of comprehension that the slightest hints were not thrown away upon her. Her mind opened beyond my expectation, as her person became more beautiful; and, seeing me frequently reading, she began to discover a violent curiosity with regard to books: her father had no bad collection, and I put into her hands such of them as I thought most capable of infusing virtuous notions into her mind, and of affording her a rational amusement; desiring her, at the same time, to come to me for information whenever she met with a passage which she did not thoroughly understand.

The

The amiable girl seemed to be equally pleased with this new method of acquiring knowledge, and with the liberty of asking my opinion upon every subject; but she was so eager for instruction, that she often flew into the counting-house with her book in her hand, and asked me twenty questions before I had leisure to make one answer to the purpose: I therefore begged her to write down what she wanted to say to me, and lay by her memorandums till I was disengaged enough to reply to her interrogatories.

She complied with my request, in a manner which charmed me; a manner which I could not have expected from so young a girl: when I was ready to hear her, with what earnest attention would she

she hang upon my lips while I spoke, seeming to devour every syllable which dropped from them !

I was pleased, nay I was transported: it was impossible not to be so with a fine young creature, who placed the utmost confidence in me alone, and who never appeared so well satisfied with herself as when I declared my entire approbation of her carriage. Yet, though I scarcely then knew the exact nature of my sentiments for her, I never took advantage of the attractive simplicity with which she unlocked the secret recesses of her innocent heart. While she was a child, indeed, I played with her, I caressed her as a child ; but when she rose into a woman, I behaved to her with a proper reserve. However, though I behaved
with

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with infinitely more respect to her, I could not at first persuade her to agree to my ceasing to treat her with the affectionate familiarity to which I had been accustomed.

When she was turned of fourteen, I left off calling her only by her christian name, and gave her the respectful title of Miss Ashurst; but I soon perceived that I had made her uneasy by so doing: for, running up to me one day, she asked me, with an enchanting simplicity, what she had done to offend me, and whether she was not still my dear Gertrude?

It was with the utmost difficulty that I restrained myself from telling her, that she was and ever would be the dearest creature upon earth to me; but I
did

did restrain myself, by reflecting upon her tender years, and the uncertainty with regard to my ever being able to support her in the manner I wished: I was also doubly restrained from indulging my inclination, by reflecting on the baseness of which I should be guilty, in attempting to gain the heart of such a child without the consent of her father, who, though apparently negligent of her, had always hinted as if her person might one day make her fortune. Under these restrictions, therefore, I told her, that she had not at all displeased me, that, as she grew more towards a woman, it was incumbent on her to behave in such a manner as to procure respect from men, and suffer none to treat her without, as their disrespectfulness would

certainly

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certainly arise from the detection of some impropriety in her conduct; and that I had called her Miss Ashurst, because the dignity of her carriage had demanded the change in mine of which she complained.

She stood a moment confused; and appeared to be studying for an answer: then, looking up innocently in my face, she said, “ You are right, you call me
 “ Miss because I am not your relation:
 “ yet, Mr. Freeland, you have taught
 “ me more than ever my father has;
 “ therefore you may say things to me
 “ which from others would be imper-
 “ tinent; but as I owe you more than
 “ any body else, I wish you would give
 “ me leave to shew all the gratitude in
 “ my power, by desiring you to call me
 “ what

“ what you like best, provided you are
 “ not angry with me. Were I to chuse
 “ tho’,” continued she, with a look of
 the tenderest affection, “ I would rather
 “ be your Gertrude than any thing.”

I could scarcely withstand this proof
 of her affection ; I pressed her hands
 in mine, but my heart was so full that I
 could not speak ; and as soon as I reco-
 vered myself, I gave an immediate turn
 to the conversation.

It may seem strange to some that a
 girl of her age, and adorned with so
 many personal charms, should have re-
 mained so long ignorant of their power,
 should have been entirely free from va-
 nity and pride, and not desirous of ge-
 neral admiration. It must be considered
 that she saw very little company, seldom
 went

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went out, and, from the time I persuaded her not to sit with the servants, was not in the way of receiving much information of any kind but from myself. There was indeed one family, distantly related to Mr. Ashurst, who chose her cloaths once a year; but as the mistress of it was not young, and a woman who, with an exterior remarkably forbidding, was also of a gloomy, unentertaining disposition, nothing particular could be learnt from her; and Gertrude was never less pleased than when obliged to make Mrs. Harvey a visit.

The time now approached when a great change was to be made in our situation.

Mr. Ashurst, who was always in want of money, as his expences exceeded his
income

income, had the good fortune to meet with the younger son of a noble family, who, being left to the care of a right honourable uncle, was, with a thousand pounds down, placed with me in his compting-house.

Mr. Saville was about eighteen, tall, and well made; and his face was not less pleasing than his figure: but he was high bred, vain, amorous, giddy, and discovered little willingness to apply himself to his pen: he was not so deficient in understanding as not to know the advantages of application, but was of so volatile a turn, that he not only neglected Mr. Ashurst's orders himself, but also employed all his rhetoric to prevail on me to do the same, spending a great part of his time in rallying and laughing at me for leading such a stupid

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life, as he called it, without pleasure, without any kind of society, and nailing myself down to a desk from morning to night, unless I was obliged to go out, and to go out I seldom was obliged, because the late book-keeper had transacted the business abroad.

Saville, as soon as he came, desired that he might transact that business, and used frequently to press me to accompany him merely for the sake of having a companion to laugh and trifle with; but I constantly resisted all his importunities: nor would I ever comply either with his morning or evening invitations. After a number of refusals he said, "If Gertrude was a year or two
"older you might, I suppose, spend
"your time agreeably enough with her;
"but such a meer green girl can give no

"man

“man any pleasure. In a couple of years
 “more, when she comes to be eighteen
 “or nineteen, she may do; besides,
 “were she of a proper age for plea-
 “sure, you must be the devil of a lover,
 “indeed, to confine yourself entirely to
 “one object.”

Glad was I to find that he expressed
 so much indifference for this amiable
 girl: heartily glad; from a motive, per-
 haps, which I at that time wished to
 conceal even from myself: glad also on
 account of the lightness of his principles:
 Had he been in the least enamoured
 with her he would have set no bounds,
 I am morally certain, to his inclinations:
 as he was not enamoured he treated her
 quite like a baby: he was not an ill na-
 tured fellow, but he would, nevertheless,
 romp with her and tease her, till the

few prepossessions she ever had entertained for, were almost converted into prejudices against him.

It may easily be supposed that I was not sorry to see her aversion to him: yet when I reflected upon Saville's personal qualifications, which were numerous; when I reflected upon his ease, spirit and address, and when I considered that though he was a coxcomb, he was the most agreeable one I had ever seen, I sometimes feared, I believe I may venture to say so, that he would make too deep an impression upon her young heart. Women, in general, according to the sarcastical assertion of an author who knew the sex tolerably well,

Are caught by outward form and empty noise,
And love themselves in man.

Gertrude,

Gertrude, it is true, appeared to be of a different make, yet, as she had seen so little of life, there was, I thought, no being sure of her continuing in the same disposition: how ignorant was I of this amiable young creature's heart! But of that hereafter—let me now return to the painful uncertainty I was in, left Saville, notwithstanding his rough manner of playing with her, might be too alluring in her eyes; for it has been frequently observed, that from strange and unaccountable causes, we are apt to slight those who are fond of us, and to try to gain the affections of those who look upon us with indifference. To ease my mind, therefore, which laboured under a most cruel suspense, though I would fain have persuaded myself that I was only prompted by curiosity, I asked her

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one day, with as much negligence as I could possibly assume, if she did not think Mr. Saville a very handsome, and a very agreeable man.

To confess the truth, I trembled while I waited for her answer, which proved to be a question.

“Why, do you really think him both?” said she, with a charming simplicity.

“Certainly”, replied I, “and among the women I should imagine” — looking earnestly at her, “that he must have a great number of admirers.”

“It may be so,” cried she; “but how different am I, then, in that particular; for I think him neither handsome nor agreeable.”

“No!” answered I, with a quickness which made her start, “and why do you not?”

“Because

“Because you have often told me,”
 said she, “that nobody could be hand-
 some or agreeable who was not mild,
 obliging, and willing to be usefully
 employed. And I see nothing of all
 this in Mr. Saville, who is rude, vio-
 lent, idle, and pleased with doing
 every thing but what he should do.”

It is impossible for me to describe the
 joy I felt at hearing her speak thus; but
 being willing to try her still farther, I
 answered, “What you have said is very
 true; but, my dear Gertrude, you must
 learn to make some distinction; you
 may, certainly, allow Mr. Saville to
 be handsome and agreeable, and yet
 see that he is uncivil, passionate, and
 a lover of dissipation. His disagree-
 able qualities, however, may only be

“ observable when he is in a particular
“ humour; at other times he may be
“ well bred, good natured, and diligent:
“ but supposing him to be ever so un-
“ amiable in his manners, those man-
“ ners will not destroy his personal at-
“ tractions, though, a plainer figure,
“ with more engaging and durable good
“ qualities, would undoubtedly be more
“ entitled to esteem. Mr. Saville,
“ therefore, may be allowed all the
“ merit I at first gave him, and have,
“ notwithstanding, the defects you have
“ found out in him. A perfect character,
“ Miss Ashurst, is no where to be
“ found, though every body ought to
“ render his own as unexceptionable
“ as possible, and spare no pains to
“ make himself better and better every
“ day.”

“ You

“You will allow, then,” said she smiling, after a little hesitation, “that Mr. Saville is not that sort of man: for he is so far from endeavouring to improve himself, that he takes no pains at all to be good, but spends his time in nothing but folly.”

I am almost ashamed to confess how much I was pleased with this observation of hers: never had she appeared to me in so amiable a light; never had she discovered so much discernment. I could have folded her to my heart with rapture, for having thrown it into so happy a state: I kept my joy under, however, but I could not help making her a compliment upon her judicious remarks, which gave her, I thought, infinite satisfaction.

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Saville continued to trifle with her for some months afterwards, and frequently opposed her inclinations.

One day, when she was leaving the room, he caught hold of her, and seemed to examine her person with an avidity which surprized me; she was equally surprized too, I believe, for she hung down her head, blushed, and struggled to get from him.

Quite out of patience, at last, to see her treated with so much familiarity, I desired him to let her go: but as he only laughed at me, I took her from him.—With a blushing smile of gratitude to me she left us.

When she had quitted the room he attacked me very briskly, and told me, that my indifference about going abroad was no longer wonderful, as I had the
company

company of so fine a girl at home, who, he saw plainly, was as fond of me as I was of her.

I strove to conceal my embarrassment at this charge; but the truth flashed in my face: I resolutely, however, denied my having entertained any sort of design upon her, and was no hypocrite in saying so. I likewise as positively assured him that I had not made the most distant advances of any kind to her. "Nor can I flatter myself," added I, "that I should succeed, were I dishonourably regardless of the confidence Mr. Ashurst reposed in me, to attempt to seduce her affections."

"What then can induce you so warmly to take the part of a girl about whom you pretend to be altogether so indifferent?" replied he, with an

archness which sufficiently informed me how little credit he gave to my assertions.

“She is my master’s child,” answered I, “she is young, innocent, and not only deprived of her mother, but without any sensible, virtuous friend to guide her unwary youth, and to teach her how to avoid those snares so often spread against her sex, and so often, I am sorry to say, spread with success.”

He shook his head, and told me that he believed as much as he could of this fine story; adding, that it should not hinder him from romping with her whenever she came in his way.

Not having professed any particular attachment to Gertrude, I did not chuse, for many reasons, to enter into a quarrel with him, by opposing his declaration,

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but

but resolved to put her upon her guard against a wild young fellow, who was, I thought, too dissolute to be trusted, though I did not believe that he, at the time, really meant any harm.

Before I began to speak to her upon this subject, she flew to me, and, in the most grateful terms, thanked me for delivering her from Saville. "I was
 " sorry though, afterwards," added she,
 " that you interposed, for fear he should
 " pick a quarrel with you and hurt you;
 " for I take him to be a great deal
 " stronger than you, and so malicious,
 " that he would, I dare say, do you
 " all the mischief he could, for setting
 " yourself against him."

"What makes you think so?" said I. "Have you ever heard him say that
 " he disliked me?"

"No,"

“No,” replied she, “How can he dislike you? but he may be angry, perhaps, because you took my part, for he loves to tease me.”

“What can you have done,” said I, “to occasion such a desire in him?”

“Nothing, indeed, Mr. Freeland,” answered she, “but — but —”

“But what?” said I, eagerly, fearing that they were better acquainted than I had imagined them to be. “Why do you stop? why do not you tell me every thing? Do I no longer deserve your confidence, Miss Ashurst?”

I spoke those words with so much discontent and dejection, that they awakened all the tender sentiments of her generous excellent heart.

“Why do you talk so Mr. Freeland?” said she, with a voice inexpressibly

sibly softened, while she took my hand in hers; "do you doubt my gratitude
 "or my esteem? there is not a person
 "in the whole world to whom I am so
 "much indebted, or whom I so sin-
 "cerely revere."

These few words, pronounced with the greatest emotion, while she still held my hand fast, as if to convince me of the truth of her asseverations, affected me extremely; I pressed both her hands tenderly in return, and said, "Tell
 "me, then, with the utmost unreserve,
 "what has passed between you and
 "Saville."

"What can I tell you," replied she,
 "but what I have already told you,
 "that he is insolent and ready to take
 "advantage of my being in his way?"

"To

“To do what?” cried I, with an ungovernable impatience.

“Do not be so warm,” said she, with a sweet composure in her lovely countenance, “you must not resent his behaviour, because I have already shewn my aversion to——”

“To what?” interrupted I—

“To so much freedom.”

“What freedom? I must know all Gertrude, or I shall believe it much worse than I hope it is.”

“Well, then, promise me not to be angry with Mr. Saville, for it is all over now I hope.”

“What is over?” cried I, half distracted at answers which increased my suspicions: “Indeed, indeed, Miss Ashurst, by your declaring so many apprehensions lest I should be offend-

“ed

“ed at this young fellow’s behaviour,
“you give me no small reason to be-
“lieve that you do not dislike it.”

“Oh! do not wrong me so much,
“as to entertain such a thought,” said
she, earnestly; “my fears are all on
“your account; and, I know, if you
“quarrel with him, that he will make
“his party good with my father; for
“he is artful and revengeful; and ever
“since he kissed me I have taken such
“care to keep out of his way, and
“treated him with so much contempt,
“when we happened to meet, that I
“hope he will neither have an oppor-
“tunity nor inclination to do so again.”

“Kiss you!” exclaimed I, quite
enraged at his daring to take such a li-
berty, and fearing that he might pro-
ceed to more impertinences, if he had

not

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not already committed them, “do you,
 “then, let men kiss you, Gertrude? is
 “that permission agreeable to the pru-
 “dential lessons which you have so of-
 “ten received from me, and with
 “which you seemed to be so well
 “pleased?”

“Indeed, Mr. Freeland,” said she,
 with her face and neck like scarlet, “I
 “could no way help it; I was stand-
 “ing in the parlour by myself, looking
 “over some books you had recom-
 “mended to me, and he came behind
 “me, seized me round the neck, and
 “kissed me with such violence that I
 “had not breath to call out; and before
 “I could recover myself, my father
 “appeared. However, I looked very
 “much vexed with Mr. Saville; and
 “when my father went out of the room
 “followed

“ followed him, though he bade me, in
 “ an unkind manner, stay where I was.
 “ I told him I wanted to speak to him;
 “ and, running after him into his closet,
 “ begged him not to leave me alone
 “ with Mr. Saville who was very rude.
 “ My father said, What? is the girl a
 “ fool to be afraid of a young fellow of
 “ his person and fortune? Go, go, ad-
 “ ded he, pushing me out of the closet.
 “ I then ran up stairs and could not
 “ help crying to find my father so much
 “ prejudiced in favour of a young man
 “ who so little, I thought, deserved his
 “ regard.”

While she was telling her innocent
 tale, with a simplicity to which I cannot
 do justice by a description of it, I grew
 more calm, and at the conclusion of it,
 was entirely satisfied concerning her part
 in

in the affair. She again assured me that what she had related was all that had ever passed between them, when by themselves; adding, that she would take all possible care to avoid him for the future, provided I would not run a risque of injuring myself, by making him an enemy.

Dear girl! how I adored her for her generous anxiety about me! however, I gave her a great number of precautions, not only with regard to Saville, but to other men, as she now looked quite womanly, and became, every hour, more and more amiable, well knowing that her personal charms and agreeable manners, notwithstanding the privacy of her life, would expose her to the intoxicating pleasures of flattery and admiration.

Could

Could I describe the enchanting modesty with which she listened to my advice; could I describe the thankfulness she expressed for it, nobody would wonder at my saying that I was unable to keep within proper bounds, the thrilling joy which shook every fibre of my heart: I was, however, master enough of myself to confine it within my own bosom.

About this time, Mrs. Harvey's two daughters, which her husband had by a former wife, came to live with her; they had, when young, been put to a boarding-school in Yorkshire, from which their grandmother removed them; but, upon her death, they were obliged to return to their father's. They had good fortunes and were some years older than Miss Ashurst, who went to see them

them on their coming to town; and as they soon afterwards repaid the visit, I had an opportunity of making some observations upon them.

Theodosia, the eldest, was about two and twenty; tall, genteel, with a delicacy in her countenance, and a propriety in her manners, pleasing enough; her disposition was conformable to her appearance: she was languid and tender, preferring books and the society of a few select friends to an undistinguished crowd.

Kitty, who appeared to be not more than nineteen, was extremely pretty, lively to an excess, and knew how to make the most of a pair of sparkling black eyes.

Saville, who would not by any means let two such girls escape him, shared
 their

their visits, and in chatting with them, displayed all his companionable talents to the greatest advantage. They sung, danced, and played; even my innocent Gertrude was, at last, though with much difficulty, prevailed on to sing to my accompaniment; and she performed with a sweetness of voice that was charming in spite of her timidity.

Miss Harvey touched a mandoline with taste, and sung an Italian air in a voice pleasingly plaintive.

Kitty only ventured on a ballad, to which however she did justice.

Saville was quite in his element, he laughed and talked nonsense with an amazing fluency, particularly to Kitty, who had rather, I thought, too much levity in her carriage, which arose, however, I believe, from a prodigious
flow

flow of spirits, from the admiration she had been accustomed to, and from the company she had kept; and they had kept the best company in that part of the country from whence they came, nor seemed to be unacquainted with all the fashionable follies of life.

Being extremely afraid that Gertrude's charming simplicity should be lost, by conversing with these new companions, so very different from any females with whom she had yet associated, I embraced the first opportunity to expatiate upon their manners, though without severity; and concluded my observations on them, by advising her not to change her own; telling her that her modesty and diffidence, affection for her father, inclination for domestic life, and taste for reading and musick,

musick, would not only keep her amiable, but render her more truly happy than the flutter and dissipation of a fashionable style of life.

To that style of life the Miss Harveys were, I plainly saw, strongly attached; they were really of a good family, especially on their mother's side, and their grandmother had introduced them early to some people of high rank, who were their neighbours in the summer, from whom they acquired all their ideas of gentility.

I also cautioned Gertrude not to put herself too readily into their power, by trusting them with every secret of her heart, as girls of her age are very apt to form violent friendships, which are seldom attended with any desirable consequences; more frequently, indeed,

they produce disagreeable ones; for when young girls are so prodigiously fond of each other as to make no concealments of any kind, prudent mothers and discreet aunts, though ever so affectionate, and the only people fit to be trusted with the sentiments of their daughters and nieces, often become obnoxious to them. Girls of this stamp generally place the greatest confidence in companions who will not condemn them for their improprieties, because they have secrets, of the same nature with those which they receive, to communicate, but will rather encourage them, in order to make them as censurable as themselves. Among girls of this stamp, however, there can be no permanent friendships; and considering, indeed, how much envy and jealousy reign in the

the female world, a female friendship of a long duration may be chronicled for its uncommonness.

Miss Athurst paid as much attention to this part of my advice as to any other which I had ever ventured to give her, and appeared capable of making proper, though not ill natured, observations on her two new visitors, who soon became very intimate at our house.

Gertrude gave them but little encouragement to believe that their company was agreeable to her, yet she could not, with any propriety, be too reserved in her carriage to them, as she had no other relations to countenance her in the world; it was, certainly, not creditable for her to be shut up in a house with only two young fellows, her father being seldom at home when

he had the slightest engagement abroad; and as these young ladies had been, in the language of fashion, politely educated, and were girls also of character and fortune, she would have acted unreasonably and absurdly by shunning any connections with them. She was not, however, charmed with either of them; Theodosia, of the two, was her favourite, as there was something of a similarity in their dispositions: they had both the same taste for reading and musick: Theodosia, therefore, spent many hours with Gertrude, while Kitty was running half the town over, with companions as lively as herself.

As Miss Harvey was so much with Miss Ashurst, I had frequent opportunities of being of their parties; I treated her merely with the civilities due to her sex,

fex, and to the relationship in which she stood to Mr. Ashurst; but I found that she began to grow rather particular to me. The singularity of her behaviour gave me no pleasure, I therefore endeavoured to discourage it: I could not approve of giving false hopes to a woman who might possibly like me, nor of encouraging a vain coquette to trifle with me. I had, indeed, no intention to enter into any serious engagement with her; my heart was entirely devoted to Gertrude, I loved her long before I was conscious of my passion for her; and her growing beauties, together with her improving virtues, rendered her every hour more and more dear to me. Yet my situation, and her father's designs for her, made me determine to keep my sentiments locked up in my

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own breast, and to disclose them, on no account, to any human being, unless things should turn out in a manner more favourable than I had then reason to expect.

Soon after the introduction of the Miss Harveys into our family, Mr. Ashurst had occasion to dispatch a person, on whom he could depend, into the country, and he chose to employ me. He ordered me to hire a horse, telling me that he would defray all my expences; and I set out on my journey, which was to be finished at night. It was in the middle of March; the days, therefore, were not long enough to permit me to reach the place at which my presence was required till after dark.

About an hour after that time I passed a horse without a rider; going a little farther

farther I saw a man on the ground, who, by his attitude, appeared to have met with some accident. I, therefore, dismounted immediately, in order to offer my assistance, which he most thankfully received, saying that he had just been robbed by a man in a blue coat, and that though he was glad to be noticed by me with so much humanity, he wished I might not suffer for it. "As the highwayman," continued he, "rudely knocked me off my horse, even before I made any opposition, I am afraid I am greatly bruised by the fall."

I raised him up, but with no small difficulty, from the ground: I found, however, that he was not able to sit on his saddle without being supported. He was in years, but quite the gentleman in

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his behaviour, and, though feeble and in pain, made a great many apologies for the trouble he had given me; adding, that his servant was gone in pursuit of the highwayman, in hopes of a reward, he supposed, if he could take him.

After some ineffectual efforts, I at last seated him upon his horse, and mounting myself behind him, that he might lean against me, led my own by the bridle, and in that manner proceeded slowly to his house: it was dusk before we got thither; there was light enough, however, for me to see that it was large, and, by the number of servants who ran to assist their master, I imagined him to be a man of fortune. I was not mistaken. I took him off his horse myself, and led him into a parlour, in which were two very agreeable women,

who

who expressed great concern at seeing him in that situation, and made a number of acknowledgments to me for bringing him home : he joined his acknowledgments to theirs, and would have insisted upon my remaining in his house till the next day, but I told him that the particular business which alone had brought me into that part of the country, obliged me to go to a Mr. Brown's.

Well then, said he, I consent, provided that you return to me when you have settled matters with Mr. Brown, who lives about three quarters of a mile farther, (my servant shall attend you thither and back again for fear of accidents as it is dark), for you shall not refuse me the pleasure of seeing you safely lodged at my house.

I was, I must confess, greatly pleased with the old gentleman's gratitude and hospitality, and promised to comply with his invitation, objecting only to the attendance of a servant with me; but as he would not hear of that objection I was forced to acquiesce. At my return to Mr. Edwards's I found the two ladies ready to receive me; one of them was his sister, the other his niece, both sensible, amiable women.

On my enquiring after Mr. Edwards they told me that he was put to bed soon after I left them; that the surgeon whom they had sent for, though he declared him not to be in a dangerous way, had advised him to keep himself quiet; and that he had desired them to do their best to entertain me.

Mrs.

Mrs. Benyon repeatedly assured me that she would comply with her brother's injunctions to the utmost of her power; and Miss Benyon, though she said not so much with her lips, sufficiently approved of her mother's speech with her eyes, which were, however, modestly cast down when mine happened to surprize her looking at me.

I retired early to the apartment allotted for me.

As soon as I rose Mr. Edwards sent for me into his room, and poured forth a great many strong expressions of gratitude for the trifling service I had done him. In vain did I intreat him to make no more mention of it: he persisted in urging me to stay with him, while I declared that as soon as my business with Mr. Brown was finished, my duty

required me to hasten to Mr. Ashurst, who could, I knew, ill spare me from home.

“Young man,” said he with a good-natured smile, “you have certainly
 “some avowed attachment to a lady,
 “or you would never be in such a hurry
 “to return to business. I was once
 “young as well as you, but though I
 “was not quite an idle fellow, I was
 “never sorry when there was a decent
 “pretence for my quitting it for a
 “time.”

I blushed to find that Mr. Edwards had so directly guessed the secret of my heart : a secret, however, which I determined not to divulge : and, therefore, denied their being any foundation for his suspicions.

He

He believed me, and placed my confusion, at my being so attacked, to the natural bashfulness of a modest young man, on being so closely questioned by a person almost a stranger to him.

When the breakfast table was removed, at which Mrs. and Miss Benyon presided, I returned to Mr. Brown; but not all my rhetoric could prevail on him even to promise the payment of fifteen hundred pounds which Mr. Ashurst had lent him, and for which he would, I assured him, be sued, if he did not actually pay that sum in less than three months. He told me he was totally incapable of making that payment; and added, that he would give me a letter for Mr. Ashurst, which would perfectly

fectly convince him he had advanced nothing but the truth.

As I was to call for his letter after dinner, I set out from Mr. Edwards's for that purpose; but Mr. Edwards, into whose apartment I went with the ladies, when the cloth below stairs was removed, having kept me till it was almost dusk, I stumbled, on the road to Mr. Brown's, over part of a tree, which lay across the path, which I had not observed, and broke my left arm.

Mr. Edwards's servant, who was behind me, assisted me in getting back to his master's.

That hospitable man sent for a surgeon immediately, who soon afterwards came to set it. When the operation was over I was put to bed, and obliged to

to remain confined to it, unable to stir or write for some time.

My confinement made me uneasy on many accounts: and I grew, at last, so weary of it, that I desired Mr. Brown's letter might be fetched, taking the liberty also to intreat Mr. Edwards to inclose it in one to Mr. Ashurst from himself, informing him of my accident, and of the good hands into which I had fallen.

Mr. Edwards's chearful compliance with my request gave me great pleasure; but I earnestly wished, at that time, to be in London. I had always been happy in applying myself to business; which business would, I feared, be too much neglected in my absence. I will not deny that I was also uneasy about Gertrude; I wished eagerly to see her;

her ; I had never been so long out of her sight before : but I was chiefly anxious about her safety, and had a thousand apprehensions, lest Saville should take advantage of my being from home to be insolent to her. I trembled, likewise, lest she should, for want of consideration, through the thoughtlessness of youth, and from the examples of her new companions, as examples are ever more powerful than precepts, be drawn into the commission of some inadvertencies, which might render her unhappy. I was now sensible that I loved her tenderly ; but I loved with the passion of a man of honour : I loved her for her own sake ; and would willingly have resigned her for ever, if by resigning her I could have contributed to

to her felicity, whatever pain such a resignation would have given me.

These reflections did not tend to make me at all satisfied with my confinement at Mr. Edwards's; but I had every other reason to be pleased with it, (setting aside the uneasiness which I felt from my arm, of which, however, I made but little account) for the whole family strove, by the most ingenious methods imaginable, to amuse my mind, and to prevent me from attending too much to any disagreeable circumstances arising from the nature of my situation.

Mr. Edwards, being a sensible entertaining companion, endeavoured to divert me by relating a number of laughable incidents which he had met with in the course of his life; Mrs. Benyon exerted

exerted herself with the same view, by reading and making observations; and Miss Benyon sometimes relieved her mother, by taking the book out of her hands, and sometimes sung very agreeably, at the desire of her uncle, in order to vary my amusements. Miss Benyon, to do her justice, was a sensible, modest, amiable girl: her person was pleasing, and her carriage unaffected. With such a woman no man, entirely disengaged, could be wretched; but my impatience to return home to my business, and to Gertrude, prevented me from taking pleasure in a thousand of her little attentions, which, though they lost their aim, as my heart was not in my own possession, were too striking not to be particularly observed.

When

When I was well enough to return home, I felt sensations more painful than any which I had before experienced. I do not know how to describe them: I felt myself oppressed by the favours I had received, because I could not, possibly, hope to repay them.

I left Woodberry loaded with civilities, for which I could only make empty acknowledgments: yet, as if the hospitable inhabitants there thought they never could do enough for me, they overpowered me with their expressions of regret at my departure; and though I was unspeakably impatient to be in London, I caught, insensibly, their pleasing concern, and averted my face from them when I quitted them, lest my emotions should be too visible.

When

When I could see them no longer, I ordered my driver to make all possible expedition.

The first person I saw, on my arrival, was Gertrude, who came almost breathless with joy to meet me.

My heart bounded at the sight of her; yet she was pale; and though a smile of satisfaction gleamed over her sweet countenance at my approach, it was soon succeeded by a melancholy which alarmed me.

I trembled while I asked her if she had been ill, or if any thing had happened to make her uneasy.

She replied, with great complacency, but with the same dejection; "I have
" only been frightened for you, as I
" have heard that you was confined to
" your bed, and thought the time tedious
" since

“since you were away. But are you
“quite recovered? does not your arm
“still pain you?”

These questions, asked with an affectionate inquietude, gave me inexpressible pleasure; and I answered them by asking her why she looked so pale and dejected.

“I have a great deal to tell you,”
said she; “but this is not a proper
“time.”

The coming in of Mr. Ashurst put a stop, indeed, to our conversation: I was very eager to renew it, but could not find a single moment to speak to her alone till the evening. She came down into the parlour when her father and Saville were gone out.

“How often have I wished for you!”
said she; “how much have I wanted to
“ask your advice!”

“What

“What has happened?” replied I, interrupting her hastily; “let me know every particular.”

I trembled while I demanded such information, because I dreaded to hear it.

She then told me, that, being willing to avoid private interviews with Saville, as much as possible, she had accepted of the Miss Harveys repeated invitations to be much with them; which, but for the above reason, she would rather have declined, because their manner of living was neither agreeable to her nor proper for her: “Still, however,” continued she, “I thought it better to accept of their invitations than to be perpetually liable to the impertinence of Saville: and I was also the more readily induced to do so, as Theodosia had promised to come and sit often with

“ with me alone ; and she kept her word :
 “ but yet a young gentleman, a son of
 “ Sir William Blyth’s, saw me at their
 “ house three or four times, and talked
 “ to me in a way which has given me no
 “ small disquiet : and I am afraid I
 “ shall have still more vexation on his
 “ account, as my father seems determi-
 “ ned to encourage him, and has spoken
 “ to me in a very preremptory manner
 “ about him.”

“ And why should you be disturb-
 “ ed?” said I, with a tremor from head
 to foot which I strove to hide from her.

“ Because,” replied she, immediately,
 “ I cannot like him.”

“ And why not?” returned I, taking
 breath again ; “ is he not agreeable ?”

“ He is reckoned very agreeable,”
 said she, with her face crimsoned with
 blushes ;

blushes; "but you know, Mr. Freeland,
 "I cannot help it if I do not like him."

The charming *naïveté* of this reply restored me to myself, and made me blush almost as much as the dear girl, to think how very near I was letting a selfish passion get the better of what I owed her; I, therefore, determined to suspend my opinion till I had seen whether this man was worthy of her, and capable of making her happy; determining also to persuade her to conform to her father's pleasure, if I believed him worthy of her, as she would, by so doing, shew both her duty and her discretion.

In consequence of these resolutions I only replied, "Love, my dear Gertrude, is not always discoverable at first; if this young gentleman me-
 " rits

"fits your heart, his good qualities and
"his attentions will gain it in time."

"Indeed, indeed," interrupted she,
"but he never will; it is not in my
"power to love him: and I have already
"thought of a method to get rid of
"him," added she, hesitating, "if you
"do but approve of it," as if she
doubted whether I would or not.

An affectionate look of approbation,
which I could not help directing to her,
animated her to proceed.

She then said that she would, as soon
as she found a convenient opportunity,
tell him, that if he persisted to follow
her he would render both her and him-
self miserable, as he could not possibly
expect any happiness with a girl who
would rather die than marry him; and
that if he really did love her he would

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give her the strongest proof of his passion by thinking no more about her, as she well knew that Mr. Ashurst would not hear of it from her.

“And do you believe,” answered I, “that a man who really loves you will be so easily prevailed on to give you up?”

“I cannot tell,” said she, with great simplicity; “but this I know, his making me miserable will be no proof of his sincerity.”

I entirely subscribed to her sentiments, but added, “To find a man so disinterested, will be to find a very extraordinary person indeed.”

I was so penetrated with tenderness, and so charmed with her artless behaviour, that a thousand racking disquietudes tormented me to a degree beyond

expres-

expression. Yet why, said I to myself, why should I be so anxious, so alarmed? Can so lovely a girl as Gertrude be without admirers? Is it not more to be wondered at that none of them has made a deeper impression on her young susceptible heart? Can I imagine that she will always remain single, and always pay me the deference she does at this time? What right have I to exact, what reason to expect such a behaviour to me (none in the world) for the little civilities I have paid her as the child of my master? I have no hopes of ever living in a manner to deserve any greater returns than what I have already met with: nor can I, indeed, look even for a continuance of them, as she will probably be soon married and torn from me.

The last reflections chilled my very soul: yet the dislike which she had discovered to this new lover, and the confidence she still reposed in me, afforded me a melancholy satisfaction which I cannot describe. I only waited for an opportunity to find out the character of this Mr. Blyth, and I waited not long for the developement of it.

Saville, who was rejoiced to see me come home, that I might take the business which fatigued him immensely (to use his own words) off his hands, soon acquainted me with all that I wanted to know, and more than I wished to hear; for he told me that Mr. Blyth was a very desirable husband for Miss Ashurst in every respect, being young, handsome, good natured, generous, and of a good family, who were too sensible

ble of his worth to make him unhappy about a girl who had robbed him of his heart; though he might undoubtedly expect a woman as much above him in rank and fortune as Gertrude was beneath him: "But the pretty little prude," continued he, "either does not like him, or will not confess that she does: "to tell you the truth, Freeland, I believe that you have the entire possession of her heart."

I could not, in spite of all my endeavours to keep down my feelings, hinder the blood from rushing into my face, but I strove to turn the conversation by saying, coolly, that he might be mistaken.

"I am not mistaken though," cried he, "I see clearer, Charles, than you think for, with all your forced gravity: you sly fellows, who pretend to be

“proof against vanity, and who, one
 “would really imagine, by looking at
 “you and listening to you, had no pas-
 “sions at all, frequently carry away the
 “girls from us lively rogues, who, full
 “of fire and flushed with youth, shoot
 “beyond the mark instead of hitting it.
 “Why there now is Miss Harvey
 “dying for you too.”

I felt my face in a glow, though not
 in so high a one, at this new charge;
 but soon recovered myself, and peremp-
 torily denied having directly or indirect-
 ly given that lady any reason whatever
 to be prejudiced in my favour.

“Why, faith, I believe you,” said he,
 “and your indifference is the cause of
 “the poor devil’s distress—Really now
 “there is something pretty, something
 “inviting enough in Theodosia, though

“ I

35 "I must own she is not to be compared
 15 "with Kitty: but yet I think that a
 25 "handsome young fellow, like you,
 35 "Freeland, might make yourself per-
 45 "fectly easy, and set yourself quite above
 55 "the world by taking the former for bet-
 65 "ter and for worse: she has a tolerable
 75 "fortune; she is of age, and——"

"And can you then suppose me
 10 "mean enough," interrupted I, "to
 20 "marry a woman for whom I feel no
 30 "passion, admitting I had vanity suffici-
 40 "ent to give credit to what you tell
 50 "me concerning Miss Harvey?"

"Passion! pshaw, pshaw," cried he,
 5 "what signifies your having no passion
 10 "for your wife, when there are so many
 20 "other women with whom you may
 30 "amuse yourself? You will, no doubt,
 40 "have inclination enough to be pleased,

“or address enough to seem pleased
“with her at proper times, and that is
“enough.”

“Aye, Saville,” said I, “but you and
“I happen to look upon things in
“different lights; I will never deceive
“any woman by pretending a passion
“for her, nor will I ever marry a wo-
“man whom I cannot love.”

“Well, well,” said he, “I see
“plainly that you will never make
“any thing of yourself; you will be
“chained down to the desk to the end
“of your days: such d——d moral
“notions are enough to spoil any man’s
“fortune: and you have, I suppose,
“instilled the same fine notions into
“Gertrude, and so you will both
“starve together; for I am sure that
“Ashurst will never be able, were he
“ever

“ever so willing, to give her a brass
 “farthing: in short, I have seen so
 “much into this affair, since you have
 “been in the country, that——but I
 “will say no more at present: I will
 “leave you to yourself to think upon
 “my advice and to make the best of it.”

Before I had time to ruminate on the
 different reflections which this speech of
 Saville’s had raised in my mind, and
 which convinced me he was, with all his
 volatility, not destitute of discernment,
 I was summoned to the tea-table by
 Miss Ashurst, at which I found the
 Miss Harveys, Saville, and a gentle-
 man whom I soon discovered to be Mr.
 Blyth.

Mr. Blyth was tall and well made,
 and had the most agreeable expression
 in his countenance I had ever seen: I

employed myself in very strictly observing his looks and watching his behaviour, which was very amiable, particularly to Gertrude, whom he treated with a tender respect that would have touched any heart not prepossessed in another's favour. She appeared, however, no otherwise affected by it than by appearing at a loss how to behave to him with a civility due to his rank in life: she plainly strove to avoid entering into any conversation with him.

As the evening came on, Kitty Harvey, who was excessively lively, proposed a party for dancing: Mr. Blyth, being more inclined to chat with Gertrude, objected to her proposal, as our number was insufficient; but Saville and she over-ruled that objection, and called

called to us to stand up. Politeness obliged me to offer my hand to Miss Harvey, and to leave Miss Ashurst to her lover: I did so: and I thought I saw Gertrude uneasy—I was not mistaken: When Mr. Blyth led her among us, her eyes looked moist: he tenderly asked her if she was not well; she made no reply but broke from him, sat down, and burst into tears.

I ran to her, I could hold out no longer, yet I so far guarded my expressions, that none escaped me unbecoming my station, nor that could discover the real situation of my heart: but who is so clear-sighted as a lover? and how could I help feeling for that dear amiable girl who was almost suffocated, with her sighs?

Mr. Blyth seized her hand, which she withdrew from him; but as soon as I ran to ask her the cause of her disorder, she held it out to me with the same familiarity that she would have offered it to a brother or a friend. I pressed it gently, by way of comforting her, and she returned the pressure, giving with it such a look of acknowledgment and satisfaction for my anxiety about her, that it penetrated my very soul.

Her tears having put an entire stop to her dancing, she attributed them to a sudden lowness of spirits and apologized for her behaviour. Mr. Blyth was extremely attentive to her all the evening; yet he every now and then took his eyes off her to survey me from head to foot: and I, on my part, was thrown into such a multitude of reflections

upon

upon what I had seen, that I became not less dispirited than Gertrude; whose liveliness returning increased in proportion to my dejection.

In this situation we continued till the Miss Harveys went home: the two gentlemen attended them.

Heartily glad was I to be at liberty, though I secretly repined at not having it in my power to say every thing I wished to the dear girl: I asked her, however, from whence arose her emotions, as soon as we were by ourselves. I should have been guilty of the highest affectation if I had made no enquiry about them.

She, with a blush, replied, "I have behaved very foolishly, I believe Mr. Freeland; but I felt myself so seized the moment I found that Mr. Blyth
" was

“was to be my partner, that I was ready
 “to sink to the floor: and if I had not
 “been relieved by a fit of crying, I
 “should have, most probably, fainted
 “away.”

The simplicity of this reply, together
 with the confusion with which it was ac-
 companied, gave me suspicions which,
 had I been master of a fortune worthy
 of her acceptance, would have filled me
 with transport.

A deep sigh not to be suppressed was
 all the answer I made; but it drew her
 out of the reverie into which she had
 fallen. Looking at me a few seconds,
 as if she wished to know the source of
 my apparent uneasiness, she again cast
 down her lovely eyes and said, “Are
 “you too in love, Mr. Freeland, with
 “Miss Harvey?”

A rosy

A rosy blush covered her face and neck, she trembled and seemed hardly able to support herself: I hastened to relieve her. "My dear Miss Ashurst," said I, eagerly, "I am not happily enough situated to venture to indulge tender sentiments for any woman; but I sincerely assure you that were I blest with a fortune equal to my wishes, neither of those ladies would ever make me long feel any unquiet sensations."

I stopped here; I was glad to have said so much; I was afraid to say more.

She seemed to be revived by my reply: I snatched that opportunity to endeavour to persuade her to what I firmly believed to be for her interest, though certainly destructive of my happiness. But can a man be said to love sincerely,
and

and not ardently wish for the felicity of the beloved object? I therefore painted Mr. Blyth in the most advantageous colours, and at the same time told her the consequences of remaining unmarried, as her father, I feared, would never be able to leave her a subsistence. But all I said was to no purpose, she continued in a melancholy state: her disquietude filled me with a concern which became insupportable. I had made a resolution never to discover absolutely what I felt for her; but I thought I might, without acting a dishonourable part, declare that I would, if in the possession of a fortune sufficient to maintain a family, throw myself instantly with that fortune at her feet. I did so, and added, "But as I cannot flatter myself
 " that I shall ever be in so desirable a
 " situa-

“situation, I should do the woman on
 “whom my heart doated the greatest of
 “all injuries to wish to make her mine,
 “or even to desire to prevent her from
 “settling advantageously with a man of
 “honour and fortune, who actually
 “loved and esteemed her, and who
 “was capable of making her happy.
 “However, let what will be your de-
 “termination, my dear Miss Ashurst,
 “nothing upon earth shall make me
 “change my condition.”

She lifted up her sweet blushing face
 when I had done speaking, and, with a
 modesty inexpressively graceful, thank-
 ed me for the great regard I had shewn
 for her, and intreated me to continue to be
 her friend; adding, with an enchanting
 smile, “But you must not think it
 “strange.”

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“strange if I follow your example and
“remain unmarried also.”

She soon afterwards left me to return to her apartment, from which she came down the next morning with a new flow of spirits, and employed herself in doing numberless little things, which would, she knew, please me, with an alacrity that doubled the pleasure I received from them. Never had my heart been so sensible of her charms both of person and temper; never had I so ardently wished to pour forth my tender gratitude for her decision so strongly in my favour: but I restrained my grateful effusions merely out of consideration for her, and even resolved to make a fresh effort in Mr. Blyth's behalf.

Just as we had breakfasted Mr. Blyth came to see how she did: when the first
compli-

compliments were exchanged between us, I left them together.

The room they were in being only separated from the counting house by a thin deal partition, near which stood some books which I had occasion to examine, I overheard a great deal of their conversation: I found that I had no small share in it.

After several tender enquiries about her health, and the cause of her indisposition, the preceding evening, to which she returned slight answers, "I was extremely concerned, Miss Ashurst," continued he, "to see you so much disturbed: but my concern was considerably increased by the discovery which I made from the disquietude of your behaviour. Mr. Freeland, I find, is far from being
" in-

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"indifferent to you; pardon me, Ma-
"dam, I would not willingly discon-
"cert you; but it is necessary for me
"to speak thus plainly, since I have
"all the reason in the world to believe
"that your prepossession in his favour
"will entirely crush my hopes."

He stopped there, as if to wait for
her answer: she kept him not long in
suspence, for she immediately replied,
with a spirit which transported me al-
most out of my senses, "I will not pre-
"tend to say, sir, but that I have the
"highest esteem, respect, and, indeed,
"affection for Mr. Freeland, as I am
"more indebted to him than many
"sisters are to their kindest brothers,
"for the great care and pains he has
"taken, not only to teach me writing,
"french, and musick, but also to im-

"prove

“ prove my mind, and to wean me from
“ a thousand follies which, through the
“ giddiness of youth, or ignorant of
“ the carriage proper for a young girl
“ (as I had the misfortune to lose my
“ mother before her admonitions could
“ be of any service to me) I might
“ have retained to this day. He is,
“ therefore, entitled to my sincerest
“ gratitude, were he deserving of no-
“ thing more: but were you, sir, as
“ well acquainted with his excellent
“ character as I am, you would, I dare
“ say, be ready to do him the justice he
“ merits; for, notwithstanding all the
“ obligations I am under to him (ob-
“ ligations never to be repaid, as,
“ without his friendly advice and as-
“ sistance, I never should have deserved
“ the honour you, sir, have done me,
“ in

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“ in making me an offer which, though
“ I cannot accept of it, I must allow
“ to be vastly superior to my prospects
“ in life) he has not once attempted
“ to take advantage of his friendly ser-
“ vices, nor to avail himself of the
“ amiable qualities he is possessed of,
“ to seduce a heart but too sensible of
“ his infinite worth.”

“ I see, madam; I saw, indeed, be-
“ fore (interrupted Mr. Blyth) what
“ an impresson this amiable man, for
“ so, even a rival must own him to
“ be, has made on your heart; a heart
“ rendered more valuable by prefer-
“ ing a man merely for his virtues,
“ though he evidently wants no other
“ charms. I cannot, after this frank,
“ this noble declaration, so favourable
“ to Mr. Freeland, expect any resolu-
“ tion

“tion, favourable to me. You have,
 “’tis true, but just said that you can-
 “not accept of me: I will, therefore,
 “give you no farther trouble; permit
 “me only to wish you happy with the
 “man who has so justly deserved you,
 “and to tell you that I must for ever
 “lament my cruel fate.”

Here he rose up to go. The dear
 girl stopped him, by crying, “Stay,
 “sir, let me beg you to add one fa-
 “vour to those you have already con-
 “ferred on me, for which I return
 “you my most grateful thanks; and
 “let me also convince you of a mis-
 “take. — Mr. Freeland has never
 “made any addreses to me of the na-
 “ture you imagine; and if he should
 “make such addreses, my father will
 “be much displeased with us both. I,
 “there-

“therefore, intreat you not to mention
 “him. By having the goodness to let
 “the breaking off of our acquaintance
 “appear to my father to be at your
 “own desire, you will greatly en-
 “hance the merit of your behaviour to
 “me.”

I could not see her face; but from the tone of her voice, which was soft and supplicating, I believed that she had made the desired impressi^on: and I was not deceived; for he said, in a voice almost stifled by his emotions, “I cannot listen to you any longer; if I do, those sweet accents, that refined understanding, those delicate sentiments will destroy all that you have done. —I have nothing for it but flight.—” With that word he ran out of the room.

It

It may be naturally imagined, that I was in the greatest hurry to make my acknowledgements to this charming girl, for the favourable mention she had made of me: but I followed Mr. Blyth's example: I did not dare to trust myself with her at such a critical moment, and therefore sat down to my desk, though with a mind in so agitated a state that I could not apply to business.

We met not till dinner: we then met in different humours; she was all chearfulness and mirth; I was oppressed with a melancholy languor, naturally resulting from the dejection I felt, by not daring to discover the tender and grateful sensations with which my heart was bursting.

She kindly asked me if I was not well; and I told her, in reply, that the conversation I had overheard in the morning, between her and Mr. Blyth, had filled me with the most agreeable surprise, and the highest satisfaction; but that my principles, with regard to her felicity, forbade me to express my feelings.

She blushed and was silent:

Having thus thrown off part of the load of gratitude which lay heavy on my heart, I became more easy, and better disposed to join in the laugh with Saville, who sat down to table with us, and was always inclined to be lively.

From that time I rather shunned than sought opportunities of being alone with Miss Ashurst; and when we, unavoidably, fell in each other's way, I
always

always turned the conversation on books, musick, or other subjects equally innocent, the discussion of which might tend to improve her mind.

In about eight days afterwards, she came to me and said, that her father had been exceedingly angry with her on account of Mr. Blyth, who had only designed, she found by the Miss Harveys, to have staid away from the house; but on being accidentally stopped by Mr. Ashurst, and asked how he went on with his daughter, he had told him that he had changed his mind, and that it by no means suited him to marry at present. “Mr. Blyth then,” continued Gertrude, “broke from my
“father without any more words, who
“came home in a great passion, and
“told me that this change must certain-

“ly have arisen from something wrong
“in my behaviour to him, and insist-
“ed upon my endeavouring to recall
“him.”

I was very much hurt to see her so distressed, and to know that I was, indisputably, the cause of her uneasiness. I made use of all the eloquence I was master of to comfort her, though I still avoided any mixture of the tender in my consolations: on the contrary, I persuaded her to comply, if possible, with her father's desire. Mr. Blyth, added I, is a man of sense, and a man of honour; he is well-bred, good natured, and loves you as he ought to love you, because he prefers your felicity to his own. Consider, therefore, what I have before mentioned to you, Miss Ashurst; consider that
your

your father will be extremely offended, and that you will, possibly, be hereafter embarrassed, by having refused an offer sufficient to render any woman happy: let me then, as the sincerest of your friends, my dear Gertrude, prevail on you to accept of what will, I doubt not, contribute to your felicity, when you are convinced of the value of it.

She sighed; she looked down, for some time, without speaking: then, raising up her eyes to me all at once, in which appeared more vivacity than I had ever before observed in them, “I thank you, sincerely, Mr. Freeland,” said she, “for the regard which you have expressed for me; you have increased my very high esteem for you—I don’t, indeed, know how to

“ deliver my sentiments on the occa-
 “ sion, but I hope and believe I do
 “ you justice : give me leave, then,
 “ to ask you a single question ; Don’t
 “ you think that I shall, by accepting
 “ of Mr. Blyth’s generous offer, with-
 “ out feeling the slightest inclination
 “ for him, injure him in the highest de-
 “ gree ?—By consenting to his marry-
 “ ing a girl who cannot love him, I
 “ deprive him of the means of possess-
 “ ing one who does. He prefers me
 “ now, you will say, to every body :
 “ perhaps, you say the truth : but,
 “ should he, after marriage, find me
 “ still averse, or, only indifferent, will
 “ he not wish, when too late, that he
 “ was at liberty to look out for a wo-
 “ man more sensible of his merit, and
 “ more capable of repaying his tender-
 “ ness

“ness with the most affectionate grati-
 “tude? As to my father, he cannot long
 “be angry with me when he is ac-
 “quainted with my real motives,
 “which, upon his questioning me, I
 “shall not fail to disclose to him.”

I could make no answer to those ad-
 mirable sentiments. Poor girl! she
 knew not her father! However, this
 passed over.

Mr. Blyth went out of town, gene-
 rously, I believe, on purpose, that he
 might not come to an explanation with
 Mr. Ashurst, who, after having grum-
 bled at his daughter for a few days,
 seemed to think of nothing but pursuing
 his own pleasures.

Gertrude continued to see the Miss
 Harveys; they became, indeed, our
 constant visitors, especially the eldest:

though Kitty was, or pretended to be, the fondest of Miss Ashurst.

In a very short time Mr. Blyth returned to town and renewed his intimacy with those ladies.

The first time he saw Miss Ashurst at their house, he desired her to be no longer alarmed on his account: "Finding your heart already engaged," said he, "I have discovered charms in Miss Kitty Harvey, which my partiality for you prevented me from seeing before; and as I believe that my father will be much pleased with such an alliance, I wish you would stand my friend with Kitty, who wants nothing but a little of your discretion to make me perfectly satisfied with her."

At

At the time of his making this little compliment to Gertrude, he was not violently enamoured with Kitty Harvey; though, as he was determined to marry, and thought her too great giddiness her only fault, he knew not any woman he could like better, Gertrude excepted; but upon a nearer acquaintance he found her infinitely more agreeable than he had ever imagined it possible for her to be; and whether she had a desire to shew him his error in having preferred Miss Ashurst to her, or whether she really was in love with him, certain it is that she so conducted herself as to make him soon extremely fond of her: certain it is too that, as soon as she had gained his heart, she began to trifle with him, but with such an agreeable sprightliness, however, that he could

not well be offended with her, though he heartily wished her to be less giddy. While these two young people were thus employed, Miss Harvey endeavoured to make me sensible of the esteem she had for me ; but as I found in myself no inclination to take advantage of her attentions, I chose rather not to see them, and to disengage myself from her company as much as possible, without appearing to slight her society : indeed, I had so little leisure to follow my own amusements, as Saville was continually abroad in the pursuit of pleasure, that, had not Mr. Athurst's business daily decreased, I should have been an absolute slave : and I would willingly have been the most abject of human creatures, could I have, by any honest means, procured
a de-

a decent subsistence for the amiable Gertrude.

Of a decent subsistence for that dear girl there were no hopes: I had but two thousand pounds left; I had still near three years to remain with Mr. Ashurst; and, as his affairs were in so indifferent a situation, I could not think that my entrance into a partnership with him, at the expiration of the third year, would be an eligible step for me to take, or prove of any advantage to Gertrude, whose uncertain state gave me the greatest disquietude.

We were both, 'tis true, at this time young enough not to hurry into matrimony, and to wait for better prospects, if any better ones had been in view: but, as the prospects on both sides were very unpromising, I strove to look on her only

as a sister, and to give her no room to believe that I entertained any thoughts of a tenderer nature for her: taking all imaginable care, at the same time, to let her see that I was not in the least inclined to make any return to the favours with which Miss Harvey distinguished me.

Miss Harvey, however, would not withdraw her particular civilities; she, on the contrary, made no small efforts to render me more affected by them.

Mr. Ashurst coming home one evening earlier than usual, told me, before Gertrude, that, as his house was too large for him, he had agreed to let the first floor to a lady and her daughter, and that they were to come and look at it the next day, adding, that, if they saw nothing they disliked in the apartments, they

they were to take possession of them on the following Saturday. He then told his daughter that she must move up stairs and sleep in a little room which was between mine and Saville's.

Gertrude's answer was only a promise to comply with his commands, though I saw very plainly that she was not at all pleased with it: to suppose, indeed, that she would be pleased with it, was not reasonable on many accounts.

After a few reflections on this new and unexpected event, I considered that this apartment was very small, and that it would be, consequently, very inconvenient for Gertrude: it was also nearer Saville's room than mine; so that she would, by occupying it, be liable to some impertinences from him; I made her an offer, therefore, of my chamber,

chamber, at once, before her father, that he might not charge us with any private consultations. He appeared, indeed, to have so few suspicions of that kind, that, upon his daughter's refusal of my room, through complaisance to me, he only cried, "Well, well, settle it amongst yourselves;" and after having given her some general directions about her behaving properly, in other words politely, to his lodgers, left us to wonder at this sudden and disagreeable change in the family.

About noon Mrs. Coker and her daughter came in a hackney coach, and brought several bundles and other necessaries along with them, though they had not even seen the apartments in which they were to be lodged.

The

The lady soon informed us that she had brought her baggage, because she was sure of liking her apartments, as she could rely on her good friend Mr. Ashurst's description of them. By the bye, she had never seen Mr. Ashurst till the day before she hired them.

Gertrude, with great modesty and humility, waited on Mrs. Coker, and exactly followed her father's injunctions, while Mrs. Coker, with a kind of flattering laugh, measured her with her eyes, as Miss also did with an envious grin. They were civil however in their way: they affected the manner of people of fashion; talked loud, stamped up stairs; and, by an excessive familiarity, endeavoured to put every body out of countenance.

As

As to their persons, the mother had once been handsome, and the girl would have been tolerable, had she not rendered herself ridiculous by a flippancy and conceitedness not to be supported in the finest woman.—What a foil to Gertrude!

As they looked into the rooms, they shrugged up their shoulders—said, that they were vastly small, that the street was prodigious close, and that they abominated the filthy city: only it was convenient for business, which, they were afraid, would keep them in town the greatest part of the summer.

Miss declared it would be dreadful to stay in town when every creature she knew was in the country.

“Well, well,” replied the mother,
 “you must try to amuse yourself with
 “ this

"this young person;" looking at Gertrude; "she will find that you have no more pride than is becoming your rank in life, when you come to be better acquainted. The apartments will suit me very well," "continued she; "so, Miss Ashurst, let your servants bring up my boxes, for I loaded the coach to save trouble in moving."

Gertrude, a good deal surprized, went, however, to give the necessary orders, though she had imagined that they would not have taken possession of their lodgings till the next day; but she knew not her people: they not only settled themselves in them with as much ease as if they had always lived in them, but invited themselves to dinner. Mrs. Coker declaring that she should be quite

at a loss to provide for her table in a strange place.

Mr. Ashurst, happening to dine at home that day, was very complaisant to her : and Saville, who could be excessively droll when he pleased, winked at me, and played off both mother and daughter, who appeared highly pleased with his politenesses.

For my part I was sorry that Mr. Ashurst had chosen such unsuitable companions for his daughter ; for I plainly perceived that they would be exceedingly intimate. I had not, indeed, any fears lest Gertrude should be corrupted by them ; but I could by no means think such connections at all proper for her.

Having staid a reasonable time after dinner, I left them together ; at tea I
found

found them again, but at supper, Gertrude only appeared, who, upon my asking her how she had got rid of her new acquaintance, told me, that they had given a strong hint to be invited to sup also, but that as she had received no orders from her father to invite them, and had no sort of inclination to be troubled with their company, she pretended not to understand them. "I am not fond of any kind of hypocrisy," continued she, "but, circumstanced as I was, I could not help acting as I did."

In a few days afterwards, they began to tease her insufferably about her dress: this thing was so unbecoming—that, so frightful—a third, old-fashioned—and a fourth, vulgar. Miss Coker declared that, for her part, she would
not

not make such a figure of herself on any account; adding, that if she would but be advised by her, she would look well enough.

Gertrude made no reply, but continued to dress with the same elegant simplicity; they grew weary, therefore, of talking to her upon that subject. They then wanted to borrow her cloaths on some frivolous pretence, though they, at the same time, bragged of the vast quantity of fine things they had packed up in a chest at a friend's. "As we design to spend the summer in the country," said Mrs. Coker, "it won't be worth while to open it: the town will be soon empty: there will be nobody to dress for, as we keep company only with people of the first fashion."

Gertrude,

Gertrude, notwithstanding her little knowledge of the world, started at these familiarities; and, as she did nothing of any consequence without consulting me, she soon made me acquainted with the behaviour of the Cokers, which she thought extremely odd.

I was entirely of her opinion, and told her that she had better be reserved to them; "you may be so," added I, "without being rude."

"I hope I shall conduct myself properly," replied she, "but as I have never been used to dissimulation, and have a great aversion to all kinds of deceit, I am afraid I shall play my part but awkwardly."

She was not mistaken; for the serious restrained air with which she refused a hundred little trifles which they proposed

proposed to her, made them fancy, or at least pretend to fancy, that she was a proud, ill-natured, envious girl——(Sukey Coker was, indeed, exactly such a girl)—They wished, therefore, both mother and daughter, to make her guilty of every fault and folly which they themselves committed, that she might not rival or out-shine them, by the superiority of her carriage.

Mrs. and Miss Coker, being wholly bent on making the most of themselves, dressed away, and affected to be always chearful, and endeavoured to be entertaining: but they were only entertaining by being ridiculous. Saville was particularly diverted by their absurdities; but though he was always pointing out something laughable in them, behind their backs, he fell in so dextrously

trously with their humours, before their faces, that they began to think they should do execution.

As for me they gave over all hopes of rendering sensible of their extraordinary merit; besides, the natural seriousness of my disposition, made me a very undefirable companion for them; while Saville, by his gaiety and love of pleasure, dress, &c. was altogether suitable. They also paid great court to the Miss Harveys, particularly to Kitty, whose notice they had attracted by flattering her and falling in with her humours.

Kitty had a good understanding, but chose, tho' she could not be called ill-natured, to associate with odd characters, meerly to amuse herself with them. Mrs. Coker and her daughter, therefore,
were

were people whom she highly enjoyed. Not contented, however, with inviting them to visit her, she appeared with them in public.—She gained no honour by so appearing with them; and she gave no small uneasiness to Blyth by her conduct, as he considered them as improper companions for her. He, therefore, very freely told her, that she would share the ridicule which they drew upon themselves, as the world would judge of her from the company she kept. “Besides,” continued he, “you act cruelly, to let these people “ be seen with you; because they must, “ in order to appear tolerably decent, “ put themselves to idle embarrass- “ ments, by enlarging their expences, “ which might be avoided by their “ staying at home.”

“ And

“ And do you imagine,” said she,
 “ that people of their spirit would sit
 “ moping in a corner? If I did not
 “ take them out, somebody else would,
 “ and, possibly, not treat them with
 “ so much consideration; as I never let
 “ them spend more in my company
 “ than is absolutely necessary.”

Gertrude, who was present, said,
 “ Indeed, Miss Kitty, if you knew
 “ to what shifts they are put to make
 “ themselves fit to be seen, you would
 “ pity them, and not tempt them to ex-
 “ pose themselves to so many difficul-
 “ ties.”

“ Lard! well! Of what nature?”
 cried she.

“ Indeed,” said Gertrude, “ you must
 “ excuse me: I shall spare them the
 “ pain they must feel, at being dis-

“covered to act so entirely out of character.”

“You are very considerate, Miss Ashurst,” said Mr. Blyth, with a look that shewed his approbation.

“Aye, she is too much so,” cried Kitty, “through her unnecessary delicacy, about people who feel none at all themselves.—I find I shall lose a great part of my diversion.”

“Not if I can help it,” said Saville, “for, you must know, I am rather in favour with them, and have, consequently, come at some of their most important secrets. Anecdotes of the Coker family will, I dare swear, amuse you exceedingly.”

“Come, dear good creature, begin then,” said she,

“Why

“Why, the lady mother,” replied he,
 laughing, “when she was young, was
 “a laundress to a gentleman in the
 “Paper-buildings in the Temple, who
 “condescending to shew her a little
 “tendernefs occasionally, our Miss
 “Sukey, at the end of nine months,
 “made her appearance in the
 “world, and her mother was fortunate
 “enough to persuade this friend to
 “allow her something weekly for the
 “nursing, and afterwards for the edu-
 “cation of her. She, accordingly,
 “put her very early in life to a board-
 “ing-school, the governess of which
 “demanded but a moderate allowance
 “for the instruction of the daughters
 “of tradesmen and mechanics, in all
 “the accomplishments of young wo-

“ men of fashion, such as French, dancing, music, &c.

“ Miss Coker received the first rudiments of polite education and taste among the offspring of mechanics, and soon out-stripped all the misses, her school companions, in learning every elegant female accomplishment with an astonishing rapidity.

“ During Miss Sukey’s swift progress in her polite exercises, her mother had so far ingratiated herself with the abovementioned gentleman, that he raised her from the humble occupation of bed-maker to him and dignified her with the title of house-keeper. As house-keeper and mistress (the two professions are frequently united) she lived with him some years, and gave him so much

“ satisfac-

“ satisfaction in her double character,
 “ that, when he died, he left her five
 “ hundred pounds.

“ This sum appeared to her so im-
 “ mense that she immediately changed
 “ her place of abode, took a lodging
 “ in the city, and passed for a widow
 “ just come from Ireland about a law-
 “ suit.

“ In the same house boarded a cap-
 “ tain of a merchantman, who, having
 “ picked up a competency, had quit-
 “ ted the service on account of his ill
 “ health.—To him the pretended wi-
 “ dow paid her court with so much
 “ assiduity, that he actually married
 “ her in a few months, lived with
 “ her between four and five years,
 “ and left her, at his death, all that he

“ had, with the elegant name of Co-
 “ ker.

“ Upon the strength of her legacy,
 “ Mrs. Coker came to town (for the
 “ captain had made her promise to re-
 “ tire with him to a little village, a
 “ few miles from London) to which
 “ place, as soon as they were settled,
 “ she carried her daughter, and called
 “ her by the name of her father-in-
 “ law, out of a counterfeited fondness
 “ for him.

“ On her arrival in London, she
 “ took genteel lodgings in the Hay-
 “ market, and exhibited herself as a
 “ widow with money. The few half-
 “ bred people, with whom she associ-
 “ ated in her country neighbourhood,
 “ during the life of Mr. Coker, and
 “ her frequent visits to an assembly in
 “ the

“ the same village, had given her, she
 “ fancied, a very just knowledge of the
 “ polite world. She assumed, there-
 “ fore, not a few airs, affected the
 “ fine lady, and, by the assistance
 “ of her milliner, who puffed her for
 “ a mighty pretty sort of woman,
 “ thrust herself into two or three repu-
 “ table families ; from whom she caught
 “ some fashionable improvements: by
 “ them she gained admittance to So-
 “ ho and Almack’s; to several gen-
 “ teel concerts also, at which miss
 “ Coker, from having played minuets
 “ and country dances upon the spinnet,
 “ at the boarding school, and squalling
 “ out Vaux-hall ballads in a false taste,
 “ attempted songs by the best Italian
 “ masters; but executed them in so vile
 “ a manner, and so horridly accompa-

“nied them with her instrument, that
“her performances, having neither me-
“lody nor meaning in them, always
“raised a laugh among those who heard
“her. As we generally, however,
“want something to provoke mirth,
“and, as we had rather laugh at our
“dearest friends, than not laugh at all,
“Sukey Coker soon became the butt
“of the company; she was, in short,
“looked upon meerly as a kind of
“humble companion, and as a very
“necessary person to be taken to a pub-
“lic place, when no other lady was in
“the way. But appearance, even in
“this contemptible light, being very
“expensive, as there was a necessity
“for her being tolerably dressed when-
“ever she was called upon to appear,
“her mother soon found herself very
“much

“ much straitened with her little in-
 “ come ; so much, indeed, that she be-
 “ gan to be rather slow in the payment
 “ of her bills. Her remissness natu-
 “ rally alarmed the people with whom
 “ she lodged, who, perceiving that
 “ their remonstrances had no effect,
 “ thought it high time to speak round-
 “ ly to her ; and, in short, fairly desired
 “ her to take herself and her daughter
 “ away. Just when they were in that
 “ situation, they met with Mr. Ashurst,
 “ at one of the houses in which they
 “ were well received, who there heard
 “ so much said in their favour, that he
 “ consented to take them as lodgers :
 “ they protested, indeed, that nothing
 “ should have made them think of liv-
 “ ing in the nasty city, but the society
 “ of so agreeable a man : but I firmly

“believe, that their design is to live as
“little at their own expence, and as
“much at other peoples, as possible.”

The miss Harveys were exceedingly diverted with Saville’s history of Mrs. Coker : and Blyth immediately asked Kitty if the Cokers were proper persons to be seen with.

Kitty, though she felt herself wrong, would not condescend to own any impropriety in her conduct ; and, therefore, replied to her lover rather as if she resented his application to her.

Blyth was extremely disconcerted by her reply, and began to wish that he had not so readily resigned Gertrude ; the mildness and sweetness of whose temper made him more affected by Kitty’s lively opposition. Kitty, however, who quickly penetrated into the
most

most secret thoughts of those with whom she had any intimacy, saw directly, what passed in her lover's mind; and, as she had really a stronger affection for him than she was willing to own, she made a few concessions; they were of no great consequence: but they were at that time satisfactory to him; for though she would not give up the Cokers as acquaintance, she gave up the point in question.

The Cokers were by no means idle folks: the daughter dressed at every man, in hopes of gaining a husband able to keep her in laziness and luxury; and the mother, despaired not of drawing in somebody. She had already mended herself by her connections, and she was, in her own opinion, neither too old nor too ugly to inspire the *belle*

passion. To such a mother, and such a daughter, therefore, Mr. Ashurst's house was doubly convenient; there was a widower in it for the former, and two young single men to engage the attention of the latter. Sukey, indeed, shewed her judgment in never making advances to me; soon discovering, I imagine, my natural dislike to any kind of gallantry. Saville was quite another sort of man, and his violent inclination to flirt was sufficient encouragement to Miss Coker, who was not averse to his person, and could make herself very agreeable to him. She was also ready, and her being so, was no small matter with him. As he could not make Gertrude romp with him, he turned his attention eagerly to Sukey, who, though she invited him
with

with her eyes, affected a pretty kind of confusion, at his taking advantage of the liberty she allowed him, and, by that assumed behaviour, made him have a better opinion of her than she really deserved. It was not in her power, however, to draw him into marriage, according to her first view ; (she encouraged every man, indeed, with whom she became acquainted, with the same view) yet he was too agreeable to be given up : and then he was of some service ; for, setting aside the pleasure which she took in fooling with him, she received great satisfaction from his carrying her to public places, treating her at them, and sometimes making her presents, which raised envy and jealousy, if no other passions, in the misses of her acquaintance, among whom, some of
them,

them, the lowest in rank, were transported to join in a party to the play, in the gallery, or to be seen in the round at Ranelagh, with such a fine young fellow ; a man of quality too, as they called him : and, for the sake of being thought known to a right honourable's nephew, many of these silly girls lost real lovers among men in middling stations, (who were deterred from forming connections with them, by seeing them engaged with such high acquaintance) and, missing opportunities of settling themselves suitably with men every way their equals, grew disconcerted from their disappointments, arising from their not being able to fix this flutterer, and ready to burst with spite at Sukey's success, though, in effect, Sukey had never been concerned in a more unprosperous affair

affair in the fortune-making way. So true is it, that the moment people quit the humble sphere in which providence has placed them, having not the least pretensions to a higher, they become absurd, and are liable to the severest ridicule: commonly too, they are thrown into disagreeable situations by the folly of their conduct; situations from which they seldom or ever disentangle themselves. Ambition in man is frequently a laudable passion; it is a proper incentive to spur him to the performance of actions reflecting honour to himself, and very advantageous to society: but ambition in a woman generally hurries her to commit some violent indiscretion, which plunges her into difficulties not easily surmounted: it often prompts her also to risk her character so much in the pursuit

pursuit of a favourite point, that the failure of that pursuit is attended with the ruin of her reputation. On the other hand, mildness, gentleness, and humility, are so particularly engaging in the softer sex, that they would, probably, make more capital conquests, and meet with fewer mortifications among ours, if they considered how much those amiable qualities heighten the lustre of their personal attractions.

Truths, such as these, made no impression, either on Miss Coker, or her companion: the intimacy of the former with Saville increased to such a degree in the family that it could not possibly be unobserved.

Gertrude, disconcerted at the freedoms which Sukey permitted him to take even before her, frequently left the room;

while

while the mother, who winked at them, gave them no sort of interruption: and it may be supposed that I did not give them any molestation by my company. I had, indeed, taken every opportunity to persuade Saville to change a carriage which was going, I plainly saw, to involve those thoughtless people, if not himself, in undesirable embarrassments. I pointed out to him the cruelty of depriving girls of their virtue and peace, and urged the meanness of availing himself of an inclination, resulting only from a natural warmth of constitution, to draw them into dilemmas, from which they could never get free: but he laughed at me, and asked me if I thought other people must not eat because I had no appetite. Yet was I neither offended nor disconcerted by his mirth: I continued

tinued to reason with him, at convenient seasons, on the incongruity of his conduct; though he gave me no hopes of seeing a reformation in him. Wearied, however, I imagine with my remonstrances, and possibly feeling a little shame at playing the fool in publick, he became more upon his guard.

Mrs. Coker and her fair daughter, in the mean time, endeavoured to increase their acquaintance, by forcing themselves into every family that would receive them. They had picked up several stragglers, whom they had met with at the Miss Harveys, and those stragglers, together with their friends at the West End of the town, made them strong enough for a rout: a rout therefore they were determined to have, before
the

the people of fashion were gone into the country.

For this purpose Mr. Ashurst's footman was borrowed, though they generally employed him without any ceremony or apology; and he was dispatched from one end of the town to the other with their cards, while Miss Coker went herself to some of her particular favourites to secure them.

When every thing of this kind was settled, and when the company invited had agreed to honour them with their presence, the next thing to be considered, was how to accommodate them; and they were embarrassed about the accommodations on the very day on which nothing should have been left unadjusted.

Our

Our rooms were not large, and in Mrs. Coker's opinion would hold but three tables : she had invited, however, company more than enough to fill seven. It was therefore determined that the bed should be taken down : but it was also debated whether they should venture to take it down with Gertrude's consent.

The mother had doubts ; but the daughter, who envied Miss Ashurst the approbation which she every where received, said, that there was no occasion to consult her, as Mr. Ashurst was the proper person to decide in the affair ; adding, that as he was not at home, they had no business to say any thing about it.

Mrs. Coker, not being willing to offend Mr. Ashurst, assented very faintly ;
but

but Miss Sukey, with an uncommon vociferation, declared, that nothing could be more ridiculous than to invite people to tea and cards, without having a place to set them down in; and that for her part she should be shocked to death at having men into a bed-chamber: "though it is better," continued she, "to take them in a bed-chamber, than "to be all squeezed together in one "room no bigger than a cabin: and, "I am sure, if people cannot stir when "they come, they will never pay any "regard to another invitation. Now, "madam, if you take down the bed, you "may put three tables in each room, "and one in the middle apartment, in "which I can make the tea."

After

After much squabbling, for Mrs. Coker would have waited to see if Mr. Ashurst came home to dinner to speak to him, her daughter plainly told her that it would be meer nonsense to wait any longer, as it would be impossible to have the bed taken down and the room in order before the company came. Mrs. Coker, therefore, acquiesced, and called John, Mr. Ashurst's man, to send him to Mr. Furnish the upholsterer.

Instead of John, a maid (the only one belonging to the house, for Mr. Ashurst, sometime before the letting of his floor only kept two servants) appeared, and said, that her master had ordered John to be with him at twelve o'clock ; adding, that she did not know when he would be at home, and that miss had ordered

ordered her to give her compliments to Mrs. Coker, and to inform her he was engaged to dine out of town, but would be at home in the evening to keep his appointment with her.

As some people do not come to a rout till eight or nine o'clock, Mrs. Coker could very well dispense with the non-appearance of Mr. Ashurst; but the immediate want of a man-servant was truly a deplorable calamity to her. She, therefore, dispatched Sally the maid to Mr. Furnish, and her daughter to an intimate friend to borrow their footman.

Sally returned presently, and Mr. Furnish's workmen soon afterwards took down the bed. The lady, in the mean time, with the assistance of the maid, endeavoured to make the apartment
look

look as well as possible, by doing which they very much retarded the dressing of the dinner for the family ; Sally not being able to officiate in every character at once, as she told Miss Ashurst, by way of apology for her neglecting it.

Gertrude, not knowing how far her father might approve of her opposing Mrs. Coker's wishes, suffered the maid to do as she had ordered her, and came to tell me what a bustle and how much confusion there was above-stairs.

Saville, who sat by writing, and who was as well as I and Gertrude invited to this rout, laughed ready to kill himself, notwithstanding his pretended fondness for Miss Coker, at Gertrude's account of things, though she delivered it very seriously, as she really pitied their folly, and promised himself still
greater

greater diversion in observing them during the *manœuvres* of the evening: he cursed mother Coker, however, as he called her, for hindering Sally, having been up uncommonly early that morning, and wanting his dinner which was delayed near an hour beyond the usual time.

At last, it came upon the table to his satisfaction, but no miss Coker appeared.

Her mother began to fret, and to wonder what Sukey could be doing, and where she was.

Miss Ashurst, very good naturedly, offered to put a plate of the nicest part of the meat down to the fire, to be kept hot for her.

When the mother had been some time in her apartment, and when Gertrude, Saville and I had been some time in our respective rooms to dress, that we might do the greater honour to Mrs. Coker's assembly, Miss Coker came in, but entirely fatigued, and out of humour; and the impatience with which she was received did not tend to throw her into a better frame of mind. "Lord, child," said Mrs. Coker, bawling loud enough to be heard by the whole house, "where have you been? and what made you stay such a monstrous while? I have wanted you to such a degree—" "and then you cannot possibly be dressed in time: but have you got ever a fellow to wait?"

"Dressed?" replied the girl, without attending to the last interrogation,

"I

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“ I am not in a fit condition to dress,
“ truly : I am almost lame by walking
“ all over the town in my pattins :
“ I stumbled almost at every step,
“ and thought I should have broke my
“ neck twenty times : (it was a rainy
day the latter end of April) “ indeed, if
“ you will not keep a man to go upon
“ these errands, we must e’en give up
“ cards ; for I can’t post thus like a por-
“ ter from one part of the town to the
“ other.”

“ Well, well, child,” cried Mrs. Co-
ker, “ don’t stand talking nonsense ; but
“ tell me, have you borrowed a foot-
“ man ?”

“ No,” replied Sukey, “ they have all
“ more business for their fellows than
“ they can get them to do, and they
“ will not lend them, and so we must

“ wait on ourselves: but before I’ll submit to such meanness I am sure I’ll throw the cards into the fire.”

“ You submit?” said Mrs. Coker, with a sarcastic tone, “ I should be glad to know what you have to do with it: I am the person, as I take it, who is to order what things are to be done, and how I’ll have them done: and you are to submit to me.”

Miss Sukey, not at all relishing such arbitrary doctrine, especially when she was tired, hungry, and out of humour, returned a very pert answer, which still more inflaming her mother, she fairly threatened to turn her out of doors if she was saucy.

Sukey, no longer able to contain herself, flew into a passion not easily to be described, and vented herself into expressions

pressions not easily to be repeated ; so miscellaneous was her language which she learnt among a variety of boarding-school misses, or from her mother's elegant conversation, during her infantine days, who had not found leisure to correct the phraseology of the bed maker, that she became at length so clamorous, that even Mrs. Coker herself was astonished at her, and seemed inclined to come to any composition rather than see themselves exposed in that manner : for the young lady, not once thinking of the rest of the family, had poured forth such a quantity of abuse, accompanied with such a deluge of tears, that we were really alarmed : Saville, rushing out of his own room, proposed that we should go down and enquire into the cause of so much noise.

I replied, "If you have a fancy to
" comfort they ounge lady, I have no fort
" of objection to make ; but, in my opi-
" nion, they had better fight it out by
" themselves." He was, in the end, con-
vinced that I had by my recommen-
ded forbearance procured much more
diversion for him than he should have
otherwise enjoyed : for the dutiful
Miss Sukey, as soon as her tears,
which almost choaked her, began to
subside, entered into so curious a de-
tail of their manner of living, or
rather of the shifts they made use of
to pick up a tolerable subsistence, by
way of reproach, that it could not but
be amusing to those who were not in-
terested in their domestic affairs. Had
they borne the scantiness of their fortune
with an humble resignation to provi-
dence,

dence, and laudably endeavoured to improve their moderate income by honest industry, or to make themselves, by prudent management, contented with it, every body of humanity and sensibility would have honoured them; but as they, from a ridiculous desire to ape their superiors in life; as they affected to associate only with people of rank and fortune, and despise all others; and as they submitted to the most abject condescensions required of them by their superiors, from a false supposition that they, by so doing, really made themselves consequential, they deserved the severest ridicule; and the severest ridicule was accordingly levelled at them.

In the midst of the fury with which Miss Coker discharged her discontent, she upbraided her mother with the very

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failing in question, with her having entered upon a style of life which she was unable to support. "What a contemptible figure do we make," continued she, "by pretending to appear like those people with whom we are got acquainted; and what difficulties do we hourly encounter in straining to keep up a spirited appearance with them? but we can't possibly hold it much longer: they begin to be tired of us; they will soon find us out, and then we shall be blown up for ever. I have borrowed Miss Mildmay's black negligee so often, that I shall blush to ask for it again to go to the play in; especially as it was torn quite cross the bottom by a great nail, while I was stepping over a bench at the last concert: then I have begged

" all

“ all Mrs. Fringelove’s old ribbons and
 “ blonds, till her woman looks as if she
 “ could strangle me with her own
 “ hands: all I get at cards goes to the
 “ hair dresser; and I am quite sick of
 “ flattering and cringing to those peo-
 “ ple to keep them in humour with me;
 “ but the pride and insolence of their
 “ servants is absolutely not to be endu-
 “ red, I dare swear Sir Harry Fro-
 “ lick’s men look upon themselves far
 “ above me, for his gentleman always
 “ turns up his nose at me; and even the
 “ under butler offered to kiss me when
 “ I carried the card t’other day, though
 “ I had been almost smothered by his
 “ master before I came down stairs, and
 “ I could not get him to lend me two
 “ pair of silver candlesticks, till I suffer-
 “ ed him to take off my handkerchief,

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“ though it was so thin, having been
“ washed so many times, that it was
“ next to no handkerchief at all : my
“ whole neck being as much exposed as
“ if I had not had the least bit of cover-
“ ing upon it.”

“ Well, but Sukey” said Mrs. Coker,
interrupting her, and lowering her
voice a little, “ you should not have
“ permitted such familiarities as these :
“ you will be undone before you have
“ secured any body at this rate.”

“ How the devil can I help it,” re-
plied Miss, briskly, “ do you imagine
“ that the men will oblige you for no-
“ thing ? if you do you are monstrously
“ mistaken. No, no, they will have
“ their penny-worths for their pen-
“ nies. I can meet with none of your
“ disinterested lovers : I have heard,
“ indeed,

“ indeed, that ’tis easy to make men
 “ dupes, but I have not found any yet.
 “ I can, however, put up with the tri-
 “ fling of a pretty gettleman at any
 “ time ; but the insolence of upper ser-
 “ vants and fellows in livery is intole-
 “ rable. You must know, that the
 “ night Mr. Squander gave us the tic-
 “ kets for Carlisle house, while we wait-
 “ ed upon the steps till the coach drew
 “ up, they had the impudence to hold
 “ their flambeaus under my petticoats,
 “ and to cry, fine feathers make fine
 “ birds—but I believe, my pretty miss,
 “ you are all outside, nothing but rags
 “ and tatters underneath.”

“ Nonsense, nonsense,” replied Mrs.
 Coker, “ who minds what such fellows
 “ say? do they use their own masters
 “ and mistresses any better? If you had

“ been as often in people of fashion’s
 “ kitchens as I have, child, you would
 “ have found that their whole time was
 “ spent, when out of their sight, in ridi-
 “ culing all they have heard and seen :
 “ and let me tell you, some of them
 “ have twenty times more wit and hu-
 “ mour than their lords and ladies, and
 “ take them off to the life, and with so
 “ much spirit, that I have often been
 “ ready to cry out, with Mrs. Sullen in
 “ the play, I wish the devil had him for
 “ wearing that livery. Though for my
 “ part I was always above footmen ; but
 “ what’s all this to the purpose ? a man
 “ we must have.”

“ You wont have one to night though,”
 said Sukey, fretfully, “ nobody will let
 “ you, even the Miss Harveys refused
 “ me Thomas, though I begged him as
 “ if

“ if I was begging for my life : but they
 “ will be here, I suppose, to laugh at the
 “ fuss we shall be in.”

“ Come, come, then,” cried Mrs.
 Coker, “ make haste and dress, while I
 “ step to Sally and desire her to make
 “ herself clean to wait : you may snap
 “ up a bit after your things are on.”

Miss muttered, that she was in no hu-
 mour for eating ; that people who could
 not have every thing genteel about
 them at their routs, looked very small
 indeed ; and that, for her part, she was
 quite dead with acting out of character.

Saville, to whom this fine dialogue was
 entertaining, beyond expression, having
 just peeped into my room to tell me that
 we should have a d—d high evening,

ran down stairs to send Sally for the barber to come and dress his hair.

Mrs. Coker strongly opposed his desire, lest any of the company should arrive before the girl returned : but he insisted upon her going, saying, “ My
“ dear madam, your friends are cer-
“ tainly too well bred to think of
“ coming before seven ; nobody but the
“ lowest plebeian would venture into
“ public company till after that hour.”

Mr. Saville, however, was mistaken ; or, probably, contrived his errand for the maid on purpose to distress Mrs. Coker ; and she was not a little distressed, for soon after Sally’s departure a hackney coach stopped at the door, from the box of which the coachman descending presently, exercised the knocker with a furious hand,

The

The two ladies, not being ready to receive company, were as much alarmed as if a clap of thunder just over their heads had shaken the floor under them. The mother was twisting her tippet before the great glass in the dining-room, in a careless manner, that part of her neck might be visible, part of it judiciously concealed. Miss Sukey was tucking up a white under-petticoat, with which Miss Ashurst had, at her earnest entreaty, accommodated her, that it might not hang below her half dirty sack, as Gertrude was much the tallest.

The blows with the knocker being repeated, Mrs. Coker called out, in imitation of those who keep several servants, "What, will no body go to the door?" "I believe they have no ears, or are all dead:" then, stepping to the head of the

the

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the stairs, and meeting Saville, "For
" heaven's sake, dear Mr. Saville, just
" open the door."

" Let me die if I do," said Saville,
ready to burst with laughter: " Pray,
" Mr. Freeland," cried she, calling to
me, " be so obliging just to open the
" door—Sally is out: never any thing,
" sure, was so unlucky. Come, come,
" Sukey, come, are you not ready yet?
" There is not a creature to receive
" them."

" Do not stir, if you love laughing,
" Freeland," said Saville to me, as I was,
through pure compassion, moving to-
wards the door.

" Oh! let them in by all means,"
replied I; " there will not be half so
" much diversion with them on the out-
" side."

I then

Mr. FREELAND. 185

I then broke from him, for he strove to stop me, though he was so convulsed with mirth, that he had no strength to hold me, and opened the door.

Four figures entered dressed in the extremity of the fashion.

Saville told me afterwards, when he could compose his muscles a little, that they were the family of a shop-keeper in the Hay-Market.

Mrs. Coker, having very expeditiously put herself in order, received these second-hand people of fashion with all possible politeness, who made a thousand apologies for coming so early. The principal lady of the groupe declaring that nothing was so vulgar as to be the first every where, while her husband observed, that, had she not been in such a hurry,

hurry, he could have settled his books before he began to dress.

A squeeze by the arm from his spouse silenced him, otherwise his effusions might have discovered more of their family-affairs than the lady would have chosen to be published.

The arrival of a second and a third carriage soon filled Mrs. Coker's room : and Sally had enough to do to attend the different tables.

Miss Ashurst, Saville and I, made our appearance, and by that time the assembly was so numerous, that we had scarce room to stand.

Miss Coker, beginning to make the tea, desired Gertrude's assistance.

As soon as the cups were going round to the different people who were ready for them, a new attack was made upon
the

the street-door, and a fiercer one than had yet been heard.

Sally was obliged to set down her waiter, loaded with tea and coffee, and ran to the door; on the opening of which, two tall figures, dressed in the highest style, descended from an elegant chariot, and walked upstairs: Sally, in the hurry of her civility, forgetting to shut the door after them.

The person who first entered the room, and to whom they paid the greatest respect, was a man about thirty, well made, and not disagreeably featured; but had so perfectly the careless insolence of people who have been used to what is called the best company, that he could not be mistaken. He distinguished Gertrude in a moment, and declined sitting

ting down to cards, that he might, I supposed, have the pleasure of talking to her. He soon endeavoured to engage her in conversation, and eagerly strove to recommend himself by a thousand affiduities about her: but with what a polite indifference did she receive all the proofs of his admirations; and how much did she strive to avoid those attentions which every other woman present would have gladly received! By her charming modesty, and unconsciousness of her beauty, by her uncommon and enchanting diffidence, she appeared in the eyes of Mr. Dawley a thousand times more attractive. But, accustomed as he had been to such a variety of women, so widely different, he could hardly keep within bounds the astonishment and transport he felt, at meeting with

with one of so peculiar a cast, and so prodigiously lovely.

He soon found an opportunity to ask Mrs. Coker a few questions, to which her replies were not totally unsatisfactory, with regard to Miss Ashurst's connections and dependencies: from those replies he believed that he might, notwithstanding her apparent coyness, succeed, if he conducted himself with propriety.

Before he had been five minutes in the room, the Miss Harveys and Mr. Blyth arrived.

The distress of the maid, who was to wait on all the people above, and to hurry down, in the midst of her waiting, to attend the repeated raps at the door, occasioned no small diversion to the company, and some confusion too among them;

them, as they were, at length, obliged to assist each other, or to go without the little refreshments usually distributed upon such occasions.

Gertrude blushed to see herself so awkwardly situated, as to appear to have any share in an entertainment so miserably conducted; and I, feeling both for her and the *mal-a-droit* Cokers, expressed my concern to Saville in a whisper, and would have persuaded him to join with me in assisting Sally to wait on the ladies: but I might as well have been silent; for, instead of complying with my request, he insisted upon my not stirring myself in the affair, telling me, with shouts of laughter, that I would spoil every thing by meddling, and that the more they were embarrassed, the more mirth they would create. "Besides," added he,

he, "you see no confusion in Mrs
 "Coker; she is, on the contrary, so
 "transported, with having been able to
 "draw together so much good com-
 "pany, that I dare swear she will
 "brag of this rout a twelve-month
 "hence, and will not close her eyes
 "to night; so wakeful will her reck-
 "oning over the names of the people
 "of fashion, who compose this precious
 "collection, keep her."

"I am very much of your mind,"
 said I, "with regard to her wakeful-
 "ness to night; because I very much
 "question whether she can get her bed
 "put up again before morning."

"She shall not have it up," replied
 he, "if I can help it."

"Prythee, Saville," said I, "do not
 "try to increase the folly of these
 "poor

“poor people, but let them have a place
“to settle their heads in.”

“No, no,” answered he, “it will fig-
“nify nothing; there is no making
“them sensible of their absurdities in
“life, but by letting them suffer for
“them. The mother is quite callous,
“indeed, and the girl is only capable of
“being stung by pride; she is proof
“against every other sensation.”

Finding I could make nothing of this
giddy mortal, I left him to the full as
unfeeling as Mrs. Coker; and, in paying
my compliments to the Miss Harveys,
dropped some expressions of concern, at
seeing two women, whose understandings
were really sufficient to hinder them
from being despicable, render them-
selves so totally contemptible by their
acting out of character. “Instead of
“making

“making themselves respectable,” con-
 tinued I, “as they, no doubt, intended
 “to appear by grouping together a set
 “of people, who would, they imagined,
 “be struck at their having so genteel
 “and numerous an acquaintance, they
 “are laughed at and despised for at-
 “tempting to crowd so much company
 “into so narrow a compass. They have
 “distressed themselves by trying to make
 “more room, but were the apartments
 “ever so convenient, the want of pro-
 “per attendants must, instead of raising
 “their consequence, draw upon them
 “the utmost contempt: to say nothing
 “of their being reduced to have only
 “one maid servant, and a borrowed
 “one, to wait upon them and their
 “visitors.”

Miss Harvey readily subscribed to my sentiments; Mr. Blyth also adopted them: but Kitty, smiling at us all for our exalted notions of propriety, said, “We must take people as we find them: if every body was discreet, and acted in character, the world would be immensely dull; for there would be nothing at all to laugh at.”

Mrs. Coker exerted herself so violently in doing the honours of the evening, and threw herself into such paroxysms of politeness, that not a single person left the room undiverted.

Mr. Ashurst came in late, leaving his man to look after his horses, but early enough to play a rubber, and to take notice of the very particular attentions which Mr. Dawley paid to his daughter, and which seemed to give him great
fatis-

satisfaction. He was also inclined to be more complaisant to Mr. Blyth, than he would otherwise have been, as he made a superior appearance.

Dawley, indeed, was not equal to Mr. Blyth in point of rank, but he had a larger fortune ; for as Sir William Blyth was alive his son had only a genteel allowance from him.

Dawley had a considerable sum in the funds : he soon discovered Mr. Ashurst, and paid little less court to him than to his daughter : and his behaviour had such an effect upon Mr. Ashurst, that he gave him an invitation to his house : the very thing which Dawley wanted.

When the rout broke up, and when the company began to disperse, Mrs. Coker began to find that she was extremely fatigued. Miss too felt her

spirits very low ; having had the additional mortification to see Gertrude preferred to her by every body, and particularly by Dawley, whom she had taken some pains to draw in.

Behold her, therefore, following her mother, weary, vapoured, and attending the company to the top of the stairs, who were lighted down by Sally, half asleep, with a flat tin candlestick, in which was stuck a piece of dirty tallow candle ; the sight of which was so offensive, not to mention the smell, to these elegant people, that as soon as they were, they thought, out of hearing, they freely gave a loose to their sentiments.

“ What low-bred, aukward devils !— I

“ wonder from whence they came ? ”—

“ I shall be absolutely sick of a rout. ”—

“ How absurd to attempt to entertain !—

“ Nothing

" Nothing surely was ever so prepos-
 " terously ridiculous." — " People al-
 " ways lose themselves when they act
 " so totally out of character." — " Lose
 " themselves! I dare engage they never
 " were any thing." — " I never saw
 " them but about three months ago at
 " Mrs. Spadille's, and you know she is
 " not at all nice ; provided you do but
 " play, she asks no farther questions." —
 " Well! H—n defend me from admit-
 " ting all sorts of people : I should ac-
 " tually be afraid of my candlesticks.
 " I will lay my life they were borrowed
 " for the night." — " It is pity, then,
 " they had but borrowed men to wait,
 " wax candles, and twenty other necessa-
 " ries." — " Mrs. Coker has forgot that
 " she once lived up three pair of stairs
 " in chambers." — " One would not be-

"lieve she had ever lived any where
 "else."— "Her carriage is quite of a
 "piece with her origin."— "What,
 "my dear Harry, do you apprehend
 "her to be of the mushroom breed?"—
 "Positively, the very refuse of a dunghill,
 "by Gad; and the Girl too—mon-
 "strous plain, but affecting the airs of
 "a beauty."— "And has as much
 "knowledge of polite life as alderman
 "Addle's over grown wife, or deputy
 "Dumplin's bundle of a daughter."

With a variety of such remarks, they, at length, reached the street.

When the last fine lady was seated in
 her carriage she exclaimed, "The L—d
 "deliver me from being waited on by
 "an Abigail;" to which very sensible
 exclamation her companion replied,
 "Nay, madam, I'll answer for it, the
 wench

“ wench has served in all capacities :
“ she is, I will venture to engage, a kind
“ of a female scrub, and has her several
“ occupations for every hour in the
“ day.”

As soon as they were driven off, shouting immoderately, a noise of a far different kind proceeding from above, made Saville and myself hasten to hear what was the matter.

Sally, we found, had slipped out, when the last carriage rolled from the door, by Mrs. Coker's order, to fetch one of Mr. Furnish's men to put up the bed : but as he was an undertaker as well as upholsterer, they were all that evening employed about a great funeral in the next lane : so that there was nobody left to perform the weary Mrs. Coker's important business. The no-

tification of that disagreeable intelligence to her, had made her exalt her voice in so loud a key, that we were indeed afraid some heavier calamity had befallen her.

“Go back again, Sally,” said she,
“go back again, and tell Mr. Furnish
“that I will not be served so; that I
“must have a man come and put up my
“bed this minute, or he shall have no
“sleep to night.”

“La, madam,” cried Sally, “Mr.
“Furnish is gone to the burying
“as fine as a lord: he was vastly inti-
“mate with Mr. Dripping, the tallow-
“chandler; and I dare say as how Mr.
“Dripping would not rest in his grave
“if his old friend was not to see him
“safe underground.”

“I do

“ I do not care whether he ever rests
 “ again,” replied she, “ I must have my
 “ things done when I want them to be
 “ done ; therefore go again to Fur-
 “ nish’s house, and fetch me somebody
 “ directly.”

“ La, madam,” said the girl, “ I have
 “ been, as I was telling you ; and he
 “ is at Mr. Dripping’s, who lies all in
 “ state, Madam. The house is hung
 “ with scutcheons, and looks so grand ;
 “ Dear me, I think a fine burying is a vast
 “ pretty sight : if you please, madam,
 “ I will step to the house, though there
 “ is a mortal croud about the door.”

Sally then ran down stairs, in order
 to go to Mr. Dripping’s house : Sa-
 ville, who stood at the bottom of the
 stairs, stopped her, and bade her bring
 Furnish with her, if possible.

Away she flew, while he dragged me with him up stairs to comfort Mrs. Coker, as Mr. Ashurst was gone to a tavern in the neighbourhood, at which he frequently supped.

We found them employed in telling the card-money, and the pieces of candle out of the candlesticks: though Miss Sukey declared that she was so fatigued for want of rest and food she was not able to live.

Saville pretended to console her: while he was in the midst of his consolations, up came Mr. Furnish, dressed in a full-trimmed black suit, and a great wig, which, added to his natural bulk and assumed importance, made him a principal figure in the farce.

“ Pray,” said he, turning to the girl who had just fetched him, not deigning

to look at Mrs. Coker, "who wants
 " me here? I thought I had been to
 " fetch a corpse."

"Why, really," replied Saville, with
 an arch leer, "you will find more
 " than one if you do not put up Mrs.
 " Coker's bed presently; for both she
 " and miss are just dead for want of
 " rest."

"I Sir," said he, pulling down his
 ruffles, which were of a depth suffi-
 cient to make three fashionable pair,
 "I, Sir, am not used to put up beds,
 " Sir: I keep servants, Sir."

"Oh, Sir," replied Saville, rising,
 and making an affected bow: "then
 " do us the honour to send some of your
 " people; for the ladies, you see, are
 " extremely fatigued."

“ I can’t, I can’t,” answered he, “ for
 “ they are attending the body of my old
 “ friend Mr. Dripping, who has died
 “ worth twenty thousand pounds: a
 “ great deal of money, Sir : a great deal
 “ of money, let me tell you.”

“ Yes, indeed, I think twenty thou-
 “ sand pounds is a devilish deal of mo-
 “ ney for a greasy tallow-chandler to
 “ leave behind him,” said Saville, pert-
 ly; “ but I suppose he got it like a
 “ rogue.”

“ What do you mean by that, Sir ?”
 said the undertaker; warmly; “ he was
 “ as honest a man as ever broke a bit
 “ of bread, he got his money fairly,
 “ and spent it like a gentleman.”

“ A gentleman !” replied Saville ;
 “ a tallow-chandler a gentleman ? the
 “ very idea of his filthy occupation is
 “ enough

“ enough to suffocate me ; and to think
“ of such a fellow’s having a pompous
“ funeral made for him.”—

“ Fellow !” replied Furnish, contemptuously, “ he was a much better
“ man than such a May-fly as you, for
“ all you have got a sword by your
“ side.”

“ D—n you, Sir,” cried Saville,
“ what the devil do you mean by insulting me, you impertinent scoundrel ? But, if you have a passion for
“ another corpse, I will make you one
“ this instant you rascal.”

He drew his sword directly and made a pass at Furnish, who was so terrified at the sight of it, that in retreating, he rolled from the top of the stairs to the bottom : there he lay roaring out that he was a dead man : and the women,

men, in the mean time, screamed above.

Gertrude, who had been undressing in her own room, ran down to them.

It was not in my power to prevent Saville from being guilty of such a rash outrage; however, as there was really no mischief done, his exploit only served to heighten our diversion: for the peaceable Mr. Furnish, though very fond of the company of dead men, did not chuse to be incorporated among them, was so frightened at the sight of Saville's sword out of the scabbard, that he did not stay to feel it.

I ran to assist him in getting upon his legs again: and it was some time before I could, by all the soothing methods I could think of, make him sensible that he was not mortally wounded.

ed. The blood, indeed, flowed copiously from his head down his black coat, and over his ruffles. His bag-fronted bob lay on the ground very much disordered by the fall, and he himself was not less discomposed than that necessary part of his dress : however, as soon as he was a little recovered, his indignation rose in proportion to his strength, and he began to threaten Saville, who told him with no small flippancy, that he did not know to whom he was talking.

“ No ? ” cried the undertaker, with the most contemptuous sneer, “ and who
 “ are you, pray, you young flimsy up-
 “ start, but somebody your family, is
 “ ashamed to own, or they would not
 “ have placed you here in the city
 “ with a merchant. You are all of
 “ you ashamed of a trade, like a parcel
 “ of

“ of fools, because you are ignorant of
 “ the honour of riches which the na-
 “ tion derives from people worth a hun-
 “ dred of your penniless lords with
 “ empty heads and pockets.”

“ You are a very impudent fellow,”
 interrupted Saville ; “ so get about your
 “ business.”

“ And you are a saucy coxcomb,”
 replied Furnish, “ who will never have
 “ any business to do.”

“ Let me come at him, let me come
 “ at him,” cried Saville, whom I held, to
 prevent mischief, “ let me come at
 “ him.”

“ Take away his spit first,” said
 Furnish, “ and then I shan’t fear him ; I
 “ will box with any man by the hour
 “ together ; and such a stripling as this
 “ will be meer play to me : I can turn
 “ him

"him round with my finger," continued he, endeavouring at the same time to slip away, while he poured out his threats, and at last accomplished his design.

When he was gone, I asked Saville if he did not tremble at Mr. Furnish's menaces.

"I don't care what that devil of a fellow does or says," replied he, "provided he does not bury me."

Miss Sukey, in spite of her terrors and fatigues, laughed at this piece of wit as she called it, while her mother gently chid him for putting the undertaker into such a passion.

Saville then having gallantly offered part of his bed to Miss Sukey, we retired, leaving her and her mother dragging out theirs on the floor, all heartily
fatigued,

fatigued, I may venture to say, with the business of the evening.

Hardly were we got into our first sleep, when the loudest female shrieks waked us, and alarmed me excessively, lest any accident should have happened to Gertrude.

I flew to the door, and called to know what was the matter: she soon opened it with some of her cloaths on and assured me that she was safe, but that she had heard a violent noise coming from below which made her hasten to dress herself.

I was easy on her account; and, after having begged her to stay in her chamber, ran down to Mrs. Coker's apartment, in which I found her a most disgusting figure, wrapped up in oils and ointments: and her fair daughter almost

most in a state of nature, both protesting to Saville that they were sure somebody was in the room; that they had heard them speak and walk about, and that they were so terrified they could scarce breathe.

To satisfy them, I searched in every place, in every corner, in which even a cat could be concealed; but making no discoveries we returned to our own apartments.

When Saville had rallied Sukey on her dread of thieves, he added, in a half whisper, "You are sensible, child, that you have nothing to lose."

"Infotence!" cried she, flouncing the door against him, with an air which discovered, however, that he had spoken a home truth.

When

When we all met in the morning, the Cokers were in tears, lamenting the loss of Sir Harry's candlesticks, which they missed as soon as they arose; a loss which would, they said, be the ruin of them.

Their lamentations were also accompanied with several broad hints to Saville. But as he was neither inclined nor well able to act upon the occasion agreeably to their wishes, he turned a deaf ear to their hints, and only told them that they were justly punished for borrowing things, for which they could not, on being robbed of them, make a restitution.

The mother frowned at this laconic and farcaetical refusal, but the daughter absolutely fainted in her arms.

Saville,

Saville, having thus discovered his sentiments about them, left them to get themselves out of this scrape as well as they could. After having assisted Mrs. Coker in recovering her daughter, I went down to him, and asked him how he could insult people in the midst of their misfortunes.

“ Misfortunes !” replied he ; “ those
 “ who bring themselves into difficulties
 “ by their wrong-headedness, deserve
 “ rather contempt than pity : and your
 “ compassion Freeland,” added he,
 “ arises as much from your ignorance
 “ of the tricks of such people as the
 “ Cokers, as from the natural benevo-
 “ lence of your disposition. Why,
 “ now, I have some doubts concerning
 “ these same candlesticks ; and am
 “ strangely inclined to believe that the
 devils

“ devils have secreted them on purpose
 “ to make us believe that they were
 “ stolen. Sir Harry can’t be very se-
 “ vere with women, you know: such
 “ things have been done with success
 “ before now.”

I only lifted up my hands and eyes at this suggestion of Saville’s, who, upon Mr. Ashurst’s coming into the compting-house, and asking what had occasioned such an outcry in the night, told him, that Mrs. Coker had been frightened by rogues; to which intelligence he seemed to pay very little attention.

As soon as he was gone out Mr. Dawley’s chariot stopped at the door, and threw Mrs. and Miss Coker into a great flurry, as they were, from their nocturnal disturbances, hardly ready to receive company.

He

He was desired to walk into the parlour, in which Gertrude was sitting at work.

Gertrude was the very person he wished to see; and he made the best use of his time in saying a number of fine things to her, which she received with a modesty and diffidence that rendered him still more eager to be listened to.

Sally, however, soon letting him know that Mrs. Coker expected him above stairs, he left the parlour with reluctance, telling Gertrude, that he hoped to have the happiness of finding her there when he returned, as Mr. Ashurst had done him the honour to give him leave to call upon him sometimes.

Gertrude

Gertrude replied, that her father was not then at home, and that she was going out. She then broke hastily from him, and putting on her hat and cloak, went directly to Miss Harvey's on purpose to avoid him.

Mr. Dawley, however, from that day, became a frequent visiter. He had before applied to Mrs. Coker, we were afterwards informed, to prevail on her to assist him in gaining Gertrude's affections ; and, it was believed, that a bank note, equal to the value of the candlesticks had made every thing easy between them, as both mother and daughter immediately upon his leaving them, after the abovementioned visit, appeared as unconcerned, with regard to their loss, as if they never had complained of it; and it is still doubtful whether

whether the candlesticks were really lost or designedly mislaid. But the contempt and indifference of Saville were not forgotten by Miss Sukey, who, sometimes with tears, sometimes by upbraidings, discovered what might otherwise have been, perhaps, concealed: for had there been no improper connections between them, no reproaches would have been necessary.

During these perpetual altercations Mr. Furnish was neither easy nor idle about the affront which he had received from Saville, and which he stiled an assault in all its forms: he therefore hampered him very much by putting him into the crown-office, and occasioned a very severe reprimand from his uncle, who was obliged to advance the money required by the commons, a con-

siderable sum, as Saville had not any to spare from his pleasures.

About this time, Mr. Ashurst began to be a good deal embarrassed for ready cash; and he talked of sending me again to Mr. Brown, to re-solicit the payment of the fifteen hundred pounds, and to tell him, at once, that if he did not advance it in a week he must expect vigorous proceedings against him.

Before I set out, Mr. Dawley had contracted quite an intimacy with Mr. Ashurst, who frequently left him alone with Gertrude, though she discovered the greatest dislike and aversion to him, and strove, as much as possible, to avoid him.

One day, upon her pleading a prior engagement to her father, when he had ordered her to stay and make tea for

Mr.

Mr. Dawley, he plainly told her that she should not serve him as she had done about Mr. Blyth. "If Mr. Dawley," continued he, "will take you, you shall be married to him directly, or be turned out in the street."

Such an unnatural menace as this threw her into tears, and she retired in silence, though with the most heart-breaking reflections.

Seeing that her tears very much affected me, she endeavoured, from the natural goodness of her heart, to hide them from me.

I was obliged to go to Mr. Brown's, and I felt a more than ordinary reluctance at quitting Gertrude; but I had no reason at that time to suppose that she had any inclination for her new lover,

L 2 or

or that he had any improper designs upon her.

In my way to Mr. Brown's, I called at Mr. Edwards's: I should have been very ungrateful if I had passed his door without making him a visit; and was received by him and his family with the sincerest demonstrations of regard. Being impatient, however, to see Mr. Brown, when I had staid with them a little while, I mentioned the occasion of my journey to that part of the country again: they assured me that Mr. Brown left his house soon after my return to London, and that no-body knew whither he was gone, but that it was reported he had quitted the kingdom.

I was truly sorry to find myself a second time unsuccessful, on my master's account, yet, not contented with Mr. Edwards's

Edwards's information, I made all possible enquiries at every house in the place in which he had lived, and in the environs, but could hear no satisfactory intelligence concerning him; I therefore returned to Mr. Edwards's, who, after having commended my diligence, asked me some questions relative to my situation; to all which I replied with the utmost unreserve, only concealing my sentiments with regard to Gertrude; yet I fancied that the old gentleman guessed pretty shrewdly at what passed in my heart, though he said nothing. Earnestly did he press me to stay longer with him; and both Mrs. Benyon and her daughter joined their persuasions to his. Mrs. Benyon had been very ill, and was at that time far from being recovered: when I took my leave of

them they all insisted upon my coming to see them again the first opportunity.

I hastened to town. On my arrival I found Gertrude more chearful than I had left her; and she told me that her chearfulness arose from a discovery which she had made concerning Mr. Dawley.

“I am pretty certain,” continued she, “that he has no design to marry.”

“Possibly he may not have such a design,” said I; “be therefore upon your guard, my dear Miss Ashurst, he may have worse intentions.”

She thanked me for my cautionary hint, and indeed followed my advice so exactly, that he seldom had an opportunity to speak to her in private: when he was not able to enjoy a private interview with her, he commonly, I observed, went up to Mrs. Coker’s apartment,

ment, in which they undoubtedly laid their heads together against Gertrude; though, as both mother and daughter were extremely civil, she had no room to shun their society, but on account of the impropriety of their conduct, which so frequently exposed them to censure and contempt.

Kitty Harvey, after the rout-night on which they had rendered themselves so exquisitely ridiculous, became less intimate with them, though she, as well as Miss Ashurst, had gained an admirer on that evening, in Sir Harry Frolick, whose gaiety of spirit was infinitely more agreeable to her than the seriousness and solidity of Blyth's behaviour: besides, Sir Harry was a baronet; Mr. Blyth only would be one if he outlived his father.

Sir Harry, who visited the Miss Harveys on the strength of having met them at Mrs. Coker's, found, upon enquiry, that Kitty's fortune would be extremely convenient : such a fortune with a fine girl into the bargain were the very things he wanted. Blyth only stood in his way. He soon saw the lady's humour, and deemed it highly probable that, by flattery and perseverance, he should carry his point : he accordingly attached himself entirely to her, and had soon the satisfaction to find she was pleased with his attentions.

Blyth, who had for some time seen several little things in Kitty, which he could have wished altered, and who thought it more generous to speak of them before marriage than afterwards, (though he had not been attended to in
the

the delivery of former complaints with the patience and mildness he had expected) as soon as he observed Sir Harry's progress in her favour, determined to take advantage of it. He spoke to her more frequently about the part of her behaviour which disgusted him, and with more vehemency of language.

The lady, shocked at his freedom, gave him some strong signs of her displeasure, which being entirely wished for by him, were not neglected: he availed himself of them, and upon her telling him that if he could only talk about her faults, she should be glad to be left to herself, he instantly assured her that he should be extremely sorry to hinder any amendment by his presence, and that he would therefore withdraw

till she notified her wishes to see him again.

She then, making a low curtsy, said, "Never!" and he quitted her with a resolution not to trouble her with another visit.

As he had done me the pleasure to seek my acquaintance after our first meeting, he came and told me what had passed between him and Miss Kitty; and confessed that he was not at all sorry she had given him so fair an opportunity of breaking off with her, as he had lately had reason to believe they should never, with such opposite sentiments, be happy together: adding, that her taste for flattery (which he had not so strongly observed in her at first, and which might have been cured, he thought, had she been sufficiently attached

attached to him) rather encreased than diminished. "I therefore am of opinion," continued he, "that Sir Harry Frolick will be much more suitable to her than ever I can possibly make myself. I must own, Freeland, that the striking difference I perpetually saw between her and Miss Ashurst, made me eagerly, perhaps too eagerly, desire to render her like that amiable girl: and had I been able to have gained the point I wished for by my remonstrances, I cannot see what harm the gaining of it would have done either of us: but as I could not bring about a reformation, 'tis better for us both to seek for happiness separately."

So sensible a resolution demanded my acquiescence, and as I firmly be-

lieved that Blyth was very deserving of a woman of his own rational way of thinking, and had no bad opinion of Theodosia Harvey, I asked him what he thought of her.

“ Ah you rogue,” cried he smiling,
“ are you not as much master of her
“ heart as you are of Gertrude’s? But
“ supposing you were not, she is too
“ languid, too pensive, for me; I love
“ mirth, though I am no friend to mad-
“ ness. No, I will think no more of
“ matrimony till I meet with a woman
“ who can love me as much as I love
“ her; and I will be sure of her heart,
“ if possible, before I make an offer of
“ my hand.”

I laughed at the warmth with which he spoke the last sentences; and he soon after-

afterwards took leave of me to go into the country.

Saville, who could talk very judiciously about every body's affairs but his own, told me that Blyth had acted like a young fellow of spirit. "I have heard all from the Harvey's," added he, "and fancy that the future Lady Frolick will have reason to repent of what she has done."

I seized this opportunity to talk to him seriously about Sukey Coker, and asked him if he would not take some care of a girl of whose weakness he had, I was afraid, taken advantage; and whose folly, if he did not put a stop to it, would probably expose them both. I also read him a long lecture upon the cruelty and iniquity he would be guilty of by leaving a girl after having ruined her

her character and destroyed her peace :
 but he only replied, with a sneer, that
 as she had, he would venture any wager,
 no stronger inclination for him, than
 for any other man, her peace would not
 be greatly disturbed by any thing he
 had done to her. “ And as for her
 character,” continued he, “ if she will
 “ tell tales, she must take what follows :
 “ there’s the devil now in having any
 “ affairs with the sex ; they are all such
 “ confounded babblers, that if we have
 “ ever so violent a fancy to be private
 “ and snug in the management of our
 “ pleasures, and conduct matters with
 “ ever so much discretion, they must,
 “ by their everlasting tattling, discover
 “ all ; and even give hints, frequently,
 “ of what never happened. Many a
 “ girl has, to my knowledge, by indis-
 “ creet

“ creet flirting in public, and talking of
 “ fellows in private, lost her character,
 “ to all intents and purposes, as much
 “ as if she had lived a week in a bagnio,
 “ though she was as chaste the whole
 “ time as a vestal for any thing I
 “ ever heard to the contrary: let Sukey
 “ therefore hold her tongue, and be
 “ quiet and trouble herself with me no
 “ more than I do with her, and she will
 “ have no room to complain.”

Our house was now filled with discontent: Mr. Ashurst, though no man ever said less upon any subject, shewed striking signs of dissatisfaction at his disappointment, arising from Mr. Brown's dishonourable behaviour.

Mrs. Coker lived as if it was not in her power to pay her rent; and Sukey was for ever disputing with Saville.

These

These domestic uneasinesses, together with Mr. Dawley's tiresome importunities to Gertrude, which gave her great disquiet, disturbed me very much; and we were all, indeed, except Saville, extremely out of humour.

During these home vexations, Kitty Harvey became Lady Frolick. The distresses of the Cokers to furnish up proper things for their congratulating visit to her ladyship would have diverted me sufficiently, had not other matters of more importance engaged my attention.

One night, when we had all retired to rest, earlier than usual, (Mr. Ashurst excepted, who generally staid at the tavern till near two or three o'clock in the morning) I was waked by the screams of Gertrude, who called aloud for help.

I flew

I flew instantly to her assistance, and met a person at the door of her chamber, who wounded me in the hand with the point of his sword, in attempting to pass me, as we were in the dark. I could not distinguish my adversary, who nimbly escaped before Sally and John appeared with candles.

I then examined carefully every place, but to no purpose, not a creature could I discover.

Gertrude was so alarmed about my hand, that she for some time paid very little regard to the many questions I asked her : at length however, by repeated interrogations, I learnt that a man, whom she took to be Mr. Dawley, came to her bedside, and behaved in a very improper manner ; that, being willing to avoid the scandal of such an affair,

affair, she had, at first, earnestly intreated him to leave not only the room but the house immediately; but that finding all she could say to him was ineffectual, and that he rather grew more familiar, she was quite frightened, and called for help: "I solemnly declare however," continued she, "if I had imagined that you would have been exposed to any danger on my account, I would have taken some other method to save myself."

I as solemnly assured her that I should have been very wretched if I had not been able to fly to her relief, and that my wound was of no consequence.

Mr. Ashurst came home and found us all up; Gertrude related all that had passed, not concealing her suspicions concerning Mr. Dawley.

He

He only replied, "How should he get
"into your chamber, child?"

"Whether he found a way into it or
"no, 'fir," said she, "I hope you will
"not oblige me to see him any more;
"as I am sure that his behaviour would
"not be agreeable to you if you were a
"witness to it."

Mr. Ashurst frowned at her, and retired to his chamber.

Mrs. Coker, whom the noise had raised, said that some people were more afraid than hurt.

As soon as Mr. Ashurst was gone to bed, Gertrude sent for a surgeon to dress my hand, which was wounded in such a manner as to occasion apprehensions lest I should lose the use of it; but the concern and anxiety strongly visible in
Ger-

Gertrude's countenance gave me far more pain.

In a few days after this accident Mr. Dawley made his appearance.

Gertrude refused to see him.

Mrs. Coker, with whom he sat above two hours, told her, after his departure, that he could not be in her room, according to her fancy, as he was twenty miles out of town at that time.

Gertrude made her no answer, prudently chusing not to enter into an argument with a woman who would, she had reason to believe, pay but little regard to what she said.

In the evening Mr. Ashurst came home, contrary to his usual custom, to supper.

Taking his daughter into his closet, in which we could hear his voice in a very

very loud key, he soon afterwards flounced out of the house in a passion, while she went up to her chamber in tears.

I was impatient to know what had occasioned this scene, though I but too well guessed at the cause of it.

When Saville went out, Gertrude came down to me with her eyes swelled with crying: she told me that her father had been very angry with her on account of her not seeing Mr. Dawley, who was, he said, his best friend, and had offered to lend him the fifteen hundred pounds which Brown owed him, and for want of which he should be obliged to stop payment, as he had met with several losses, and therefore insisted upon her being very complaisant to him,

him, as it was in his power to restore him to his former situation, and make her fortune.

“ And what answer did you return?”
said I.

“ I answered, chiefly, with my tears,”
said the dear unhappy girl. “ I am
“ grieved, you may be sure, to find my
“ father so distressed, but much more
“ grieved to find him so ready to accept
“ of assistance from a villain, for so must
“ I call the man who would seduce his
“ child, under the pretence of serving
“ him : but I will tell him to-morrow
“ that I will work for my living, and do
“ any thing to get an honest subsistence,
“ rather than be a burthen to him : and
“ I will sooner die than encourage Mr.
“ Dawley to be serviceable to my father
“ by suffering freedoms which must
occasion

“ occasion loss of honour, peace, and all
“ that’s dear to me.”

A fresh shower of tears stopped all further utterance.

I was so deeply affected by her virtuous sorrows, that it was some time before I could pronounce a single word: when I was capable of articulation, I commended her for nobly preferring poverty to infamy, in the highest terms: telling her, that we were all liable to afflictions in this checquered world; but that heaven, who knew the integrity of her heart, would, I hoped, send her relief when she least expected it.

“ Alas!” cried she, with a heart-felt sigh, “ I have no friend but heaven and
“ you.”

I assured her that I wished ardently to be a useful friend. “ But, my dear
“ Miss

“ Miss Ashurst,” added I, “ if we trust
“ in Providence, who never forsakes the
“ virtuous, we must not immediately
“ abandon ourselves to despair on every
“ disagreeable change of fortune. By
“ an unrepining submission to the de-
“ crees of the Almighty, and by sup-
“ porting ourselves with a proper for-
“ titude under our sufferings, we shall do
“ all that is required of us : and the
“ more we exert ourselves in the prac-
“ tice of those virtues, so necessary for
“ us, the more reason shall we have to
“ hope for the speedy removal of our
“ troubles.”



END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

